A million little times

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A million little times

by orphan_account

Summary

> Don’t call me kid, don’t call me baby. Look at this idiotic fool that you made me. You taught me a secret language I can’t speak with anyone else, and you know damn well for you I would ruin myself a million little times
>
> A long fic of the black sisters time at hogwarts and beyond

Notes

> Thanks for starting this story! it's gonna be long. Like 200 chapters! just a warning :)

Chapter 1 - Life Is Just a Classroom

The chair beneath her dug into her bones, the discomfort of sitting for hours beginning to take its toll. Her back ached from the strain of sitting perfectly straight, and the tightness of her corset made her want to wince every time she took a shallow breath. Her face could not tell you any of this, she knew that. She was a Black and she knew how to present herself as one. As her haughty gaze roamed the table, she acknowledged that not all Blacks knew how to act. She inwardly scoffed watching her young cousin Sirius grin and flick a pea across the table, not even flinching at the stinging hex he received for his behavior. Bella hated his behavior but knew better than to speak against it.

She turned her watchful eyes to her sisters on either side of her, eyeing them with a withering glare. She didn't have to speak for them to know she was instructing them not to even let the thought of behaving like Sirius into their minds. Satisfied with her management of the situation she turned her gaze forwards again. She found adults didn't pay as much attention to you if you looked uninterested. They never even noticed her listening. Right now they were talking about her.

Cygnus boasted to Walburga about how Bellatrix had already mastered most of the spells she would be learning in the year at Hogwarts. He ranted on about the advantages of being in a pure blood household. It was natural that the children being in a family of magic should learn it first and be allowed to excel above those with less blood superiority. At this point in the conversation Bella tuned out. She had heard the pureblood speech and did not care to hear it again. Although her Aunt Walburga seemed to be hanging onto every word. She and her father had always been the most passionate about blood purity.

Hours later the children were excused and Bellatrix walked up the ornate stairs of their estate to her bedroom. Turning the door and walking in, Bellatrix snapped her fingers causing the house elf standing in the corner to scramble towards her. As she sat down the elf unlaced her corset and Bellatrix let out a long breath. The elf began to work on the intricate braids woven into Bellatrix's hair. As the brush passed through her sleek hair she heard the door creak.

Her mother walked in and snatched the brush from the elf.
"Go down to the kitchens." She commanded harshly.
Bellatrix heard the elf whisper "yes miss" just before the crack of apparition.

"Everything packed for tomorrow?"
Bellatrix looked up at her mother's stormy eyes through the reflection in the mirror and nodded firmly.
A firm nod came from the woman and then to Bella's surprise a pat on the shoulder.
"You will do well, and you will make our family proud." As her mother made to leave, she whispered one more thing in Bella's ear.
"Always remember. Toujours Pur."

Tossing and turning that night Bella remembered her mother's words. Toujours pur. Always pure. That's what she knew she had to be starting at Hogwarts tomorrow. No mistakes and no

emotions. Just perfect purity. She knew this was all that mattered.

Chapter 2 - say my name and everything just stops

Chapter Summary

a meeting of a stony faced black and a bubbly blonde journalist

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They arrived at platform 9 ¾ via apparition. A small twinge of satisfaction appeared when Bella noticed she was the only one of her sisters to not look ill from the apparition. She watched their lips tremble as they hugged her goodbye and she only felt disgust at their display of weakness. She wasn't even going to be gone a whole year and that warranted crying in public for them. She scoffed and nodded to her parents.

Before her mother could open her mouth Bella spoke "Toujours Pur, I know and I won't forget."

She ran through the brick feeling only a slight warmth at the proud smile on her mother's face.

As she shook off the tight squeezing feeling of running through the brick wall she glanced up at the Hogwarts Express. Nodding once, firmly to herself as if to assure herself she could do this she gripped her wand and her trunk and got on the train. She hadn't busied herself with goodbyes for long and so found herself with a large option of empty compartments while the other children blubbered into their parents' arms outside.

She slid the compartment door shut and with it freed herself from the noise of the train. Sitting down on the bench of the train she made sure to keep her back upright, never allowing a relaxed curve to her spine. She stared out the window and felt the train begin to lurch.

As the train began to move her compartment door slid open. Rolling her eyes, Bellatrix turned her eyes towards the door. She had been preparing to fix the offender with a withering glare but was surprised to see it was someone her age walking into the compartment.

The girl had blonde hair, though not quite as blonde as Narcissa's and was wearing a sly grin as she looked Bellatrix over.

Over the surprise of the intrusion Bellatrix raised one eyebrow.

“Is there no other compartment you could find yourself in?”

The girl simply grinned, crossing her small legs as she made herself comfortable on the bench across Bellatrix. “No I think I’m quite happy here.”

Bellatrix frowned then nodded firmly sticking out her hand “Bellatrix Black”

The girl’s lips twitched at the statement. “Oh I know who you are.”

Bellatrix simply frowned again. This conversation seemed to be slipping from her control and she was used to being the one holding the reins.

“And how do you know that?”

“Well that’s easy,” The blonde girl stated “I’m going to be a journalist so it’s my job to know.”

Looking at Bellatrix for her opinion on the statement then deciding she didn’t need it she moved on.

“The sacred 28 are a very important set of families. I would know because I was born into them. And I’ve learned over the years watching my father work at the ministry that the best way to figure out what the future of the 28 are going to be up to is by monitoring them from a young age.”

Bellatrix nodded haughtily “That makes sense but it doesn’t explain how you know who I am.”

The blonde girl flashed her grin and said, “Oh that part was easy, you’re the only Black attending Hogwarts starting this year.” Then with a teasing look in her eye. “Blacks are very easy to spot.”

“Do tell.”

“I mean just look at how you’re sitting. your spine's straight even though there’s a comfortable cushion behind you, eyebrows arched, and high cheekbones.”

Bellatrix frowned at how easily this girl had discovered her. Not that she minded being noticed as being a Black. In fact it was something she was quite proud of. But for this girl to know so much about her made a sinking feeling appear in her stomach.

“You said you were part of the sacred 28. What family?”

“The Skeeters, I’m Rita Skeeter.”

Bellatrix nodded and looked at Rita up and down quizzically. “Any idea what house you’re gonna be in Rita?”

Rita laughed as she stared out the window. “Same as you I imagine. A Slytherin. I’m far to cunning to be anything else.”

Bellatrix nodded once again, feeling thoroughly overwhelmed by the conversation. She had been trained in how to speak and manipulate a conversation to her own gain for as long as she could remember and yet some kid on a train had just had her wrapped around her finger. Bellatrix decided this Rita girl could be dangerous and it would be important to keep her close.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading, hope you enjoyed <3

Chapter 3 - I jump from the train, I ride off alone

Chapter Summary

sorting ceremony

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bellatrix knew better than to let her mouth hang open and gape like the other first years at the Great Lake as they sailed across however, she couldn't argue with the fact that it was beautiful.

The black water shimmered under the stars and moon's light and as she leaned over the side of the boat she saw her own face staring back at her through the deep water.

How fitting she thought, A Black amongst the stars.

Skimming her hand on the water as they floated along, she had a feeling Hogwarts would be where she belonged.

Leaving the boat as they arrived at the castle Bellatrix began to feel herself crowded in the horde of children pushing their way to the door. Frowning at their immaturity Bella held her head high and kept her graceful gait all the way to the door.

She was ushered to very near the front of the line by a very stern looking witch who must have been Minerva McGonagall. She had been warned by her parents of the formidable witch's strictness and hastened to find her spot in line.

They were ushered through another set of doors and into the great hall. As they walked forwards Bella observed the aged oaken table where the teachers sat at the other end of the hall.

Many she recognized and some she didn't. Most important was the headmaster Dumbledore. She knew her parents disapproved of him but she would be careful to appease him if she had to live in the same castle as him for the next seven years.

She watched as child after child squirmed in the stool in front of the four house tables. Their eyes squeezed shut and many of them seemed to be mumbling to the old hat on their heads.

While she wouldn't normally dignify having something so filthy on her head, she supposed she could make an exception for something as old and magical as the sorting hat.

"Bellatrix Black" McGonagall read from the scroll of names she was holding.

She stood up and walked towards the stool being certain to keep her back straight and her head held high. She chose to ignore the eyes on her.

Sitting on the stool she waited for the hat to be placed on her head, and then…

“Hmmmm.”

“Hello?”

“Hmmm.”

“Aren’t you going to answer me?”

“You’re an interesting little thing, aren’t you?”

“Put me in Slytherin.”

“Awful demanding too.”

“I’m saving you time. I already know where I belong.”

“Well I suppose you are right, even if I don’t like being told how to do my job. Better be….”

“Slytherin!”

Knowing this part was announced to the entire hall Bellatrix got off of the stool and handed the sorting hat to McGonagall.

She walked over to the Slytherin table and sat with the other sorted first years. She gave polite smiles to a few she knew as well as the dark-skinned girl sitting next to her.

When the girl smiled back Bellatrix reached out her hand

“Black.”

“Zabini”

“I’ve never heard that last name before. Are you a pure blood?”

The dark-skinned girl nodded at the question though she didn’t look particularly pleased about it. “Yes, just a poor one. I imagine your circle of purebloods has a few more galleons in the vault.”

Satisfied by this answer Bellatrix nodded turning her attention back to the sorting ceremony. Next in line was Skeeter.

The girl walked up to the stool, her hair bouncing with every step. Bellatrix noticed the Hufflepuff table beginning to scooch down in their bench a bit seeming to prepare for one more.

To everyone's surprise the hat had barely been on Rita's head before it shouted out "Slytherin." And Rita flitted over to Bellatrix's side.

"What did I tell you" She grinned teasingly. "You're stuck with me."

Bella just nodded and turned back to her plate. She picked at the pieces at it while waiting for the designated prefects to give them the password to the common room and assign them dormitories.

When everyone had finished eating and Dumbledore had sung what she considered to be a rather foolish song, the prefects began to lead them down a set of stairs near the hall into the dungeons.

"Don't forget the password or you won't be able to get in. This week it's amanita phaloides."

Bellatrix mumbled the Latin words to herself a few times to familiarize herself with them as they walked into the common room.

This time she allowed her mouth to hang open. The common room was everything she could wish for. The soft light coming through the underwater windows from the sunset above the lake and the soft cushioned couches in front of the fireplace. The desks in front of a stone wall where some students had already begun to place quills and parchments.

She had never felt once at her family's estate what she felt walking into her common room. This was home, she felt it in her bones. A prefect different from the one before came up to her startling her out of her reverie.

"Black, is it?"

"Yes." She confirmed."

The dark-haired boy read over the parchment in his hands a few times.

"Perfect. You will be rooming with Skeeter, Zabini, and Carrow in dorm four. You will find your trunk has already been placed at your bed."

Bellatrix allowed herself a small smile as she walked down the steps into the girls dormitory. When she got into her room she was surprised to see Rita and Zabini had arrived already.

Rita flashed a blinding smile to Bellatrix and patted the bed next to hers. Hesitantly Bellatrix settled down on the soft emerald green bedding on the canopy bed.

"Looks like your really stuck with me for the long haul huh Trix?" Rita laughed from her own bed.

“Don’t call me that.” Said Bellatrix firmly shutting her curtains shut. Keeping Rita Skeeter close might prove to be more trying than she had initially thought.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading lovelies. As always constructive criticism is welcome. <3

Chapter 4 - So Ahead of The Curve

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bellatrix woke up to the sound of the curtains on her canopy bed sliding open. Groaning, she sat up and rubbed her eyes scowling at the offender who had disturbed her rest.

Of course. Skeeter.

“Hey Trix!” The girl grinned as she threw herself onto Bellatrix’s bed.

“Don’t call me that.” Bellatrix mumbled pushing the other girl off her bed.

“Why am I awake right now.”

Rita shrugged, seemingly unbothered by the aggressive shove off the bed.

“Figured you might not want to be late for Charms seeing as it’s in half an hour.”

Bellatrix’s eyebrows shot up at that. She couldn’t be late for her first class; her mother would throw a fit.

Hurriedly she jumped out of bed and opened her trunk. She mumbled a quick thank you to Rita as she found a white button up.

She slipped the shirt over her head quickly, willing herself to ignore the chill of the dungeons. She grabbed her green tie and walked over to the vanity in the corner of the room. She tied the tie tightly and frowned at her reflection in the mirror.

Normally a house elf or her mother would help her tame her wild hair in the morning. Staring hesitantly at the hairbrush in her trunk she grabbed it and attempted to run it through her dark hair.

She winced immediately at the tug of her hair and frowned at the brush now stuck in her hair.

“Want some help with that?” Rita offered from her bed where she had been silently observing the situation.

Bristling at the thought of a practical stranger touching her but realizing she couldn’t go to class looking like this Bellatrix nodded.

Rita gently pulled the brush from her hair and began to brush Bella’s hair.

Bellatrix watched through the mirror as Rita worked.

“Always start at the bottom and work your way up.” Rita muttered. “Especially with this much hair.”

“Thank you.”

“Do you want me to braid it for you?” Rita offered.

Bellatrix looked at her confused “Why?”

“It will help it to not get knotted throughout the day. Less work to brush out at night.”

“Okay.” Bellatrix agreed.

Rita’s fingers moved swiftly through Bella’s hair, weaving the strands through each other. In a matter of moments Bellatrix had a long thick braid hanging over her shoulder.

“Thank you.” Bellatrix offered, looking up at Rita with a small smile.

“It’s no problem.” Rita said offering her own grin. “Let’s head to charms yeah.”

Both girls left the common room and began the journey up to the south tower. Bellatrix had studied the layout of Hogwarts before leaving, her mother determined to have her daughter impress once she arrived at school. Having already studied the layout she knew where the south tower was, but she was surprised to see Rita leading the way through the corridors.

“How do you know Hogwarts so well?” Bellatrix asked.

“Just because someone wasn’t born into the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black doesn’t mean they can’t be brilliant Trix.” Rita said teasingly.

She chose to ignore Bellatrix’s scowl as she pushed the door to the charm’s classroom open.

“Don’t call me that.”

“What Trix?”

“Yes. It’s not my name.”

Rita rolled her eyes. “It’s a nickname. Relax.”

Scowling again Bellatrix sat at the end of the desk row watching as Rita followed her.

Bellatrix just rolled her eyes at the blonde girl and began to set up her quill and inkpot.

She had just finished setting it up when Professor Flitwick walked in and began to speak.

“Good morning first year Slytherins.” He began, voice squeaking.

Bellatrix raised an eyebrow at the foolish giggles of the students around her. They would regret that once their work began being graded.

“Today we are going to be starting with the Lumos charm. Does anyone know what the Lumos charm does?”

Both Bellatrix and Rita immediately raised their hands.

“Ms. Skeeter.” Flitwick nodded.

“The Lumos spell allows you to illuminate the tip of your wand and see in the dark.” She smirked at Bellatrix feeling quite satisfied with her answer.

“Very good Ms. Skeeter. Any idea what the wand movement for the spell is.”

Confidence diminishing from her face Rita shook her head and Bellatrix shot her hand up into the air returning Rita’s smirk.

Flitwick nodded at her. “Ms. Black.”

“A loop motion, Sir.”

He nodded, “Very good girls, 10 points to Slytherin.”

Rita grinned at Bellatrix, and she allowed herself a small smile as the class began practicing the wand motion. Mother would be proud.

Chapter End Notes

Hi lovelies! thanks as always for reading. Constructive criticism is always appreciated.

Chapter 5 - She Knows Exactly What She's Doing

Chapter Notes

sorry it's a shorter chapter this time

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Snow blew through the astronomy tower sending a chilling shiver through the students and an announcement from the professor that the class would be resumed at the next full moon.

Sighs of relief could be heard from the students as they began to pack up their things.

Rita watched as Bellatrix batted at the snowflakes flying into her eyes as she attempted to roll up her star chart.

“Here let me help Trix.” she offered, ignoring the glare Bellatrix sent her for the nickname.

“Thanks.” She muttered sullenly as she tucked the piece of parchment into her satchel.

Both girls swung their satchels over their backs, and as they began the long walk to the dungeons were joined by Zabini and Carrow.

“Oh, God’s I can’t wait to drop this class.” Zabini muttered.

“Don’t you think it’s useful?” Bellatrix asked surprised. Astronomy had always been seen as important in her family.

Zabini shrugged her shoulders. “Nothing is particularly useful to me besides potions and charms.

“What about spells for your future career?” Rita questioned, intruged by Zabini’s disinterest.

“Not interested in getting a job.”

Bellatrix raised her eyebrows in surprise at this.

“What are you going to do.”

“Mary rich.” The girl responded laughing gleefully.

Surprised, Bella thought to herself. She supposed it really was not that different from what was going to happen to her. She would be betrothed to someone who would help propel the family's status forward and that would be it.

Zabini was just going to be marrying for her own personal benefit, Bellatrix respected that.

“Well, I’m going to be a journalist.” Rita said firmly.

“We know” the girls said in unison.

“You only tell us all the time.” Said Carrow. “And plus, I’m sure everyone in the school can tell from the way you’re always scribbling away in your journals.”

Rita’s pale cheeks dusted pink at the comment, but she continued confidently “I am going to be the best journalist, you’ll see.”

The other girls giggled but Bellatrix didn’t doubt her statement. Rita Skeeter was a force of nature.

Later that night the lights had been dimmed in the dorm and Carrow had already drifted off. Zabini had her curtains drawn but a faint lumos could be seen through the curtains. She seemed to love her privacy as much as Bellatrix did.

Bellatrix walked over to Rita’s bed and leant against the wooden post nearest to the other girl.

“What are you working on?” she asked, nodding her pointed chin to the journal Rita was writing in.

“Nothing much, I just overheard Molly Prewett talking about Arthur Weasley the other day and wanted to write it down.”

“Why?”

Rita shrugged her shoulders. “Just to document it, I guess. It doesn’t seem important now but let's say they break up in two weeks. I’m the one who knew when it started. I have the information. And people love information.”

Bellatrix nodded her head at that. “I get it, but I don’t think that’s why you do it Rita.”

“Really” Rita said raising an eyebrow. “And why pray tell do I do it Bellatrix Black?”

Bellatrix shrugged her shoulders as she walked towards her own bed, undoing the braid Rita had put into her hair that morning.

“You like the power.”

Rita laughed as Bellatrix crawled into bed, shutting the curtains firmly around herself.

Flipping through her journal she read the pages and realized Bellatrix was right. She did love the power. And she decided she should do something about it.

Chapter End Notes

As always thanks for reading and constructive criticism is appreciated. <3

Chapter 6 - The Rumours Are Terrible and Cruel

Bellatrix and Rita sat at a table in the more secluded part of the library, though at this time of year not many students were that interested in studying anyways.

Bellatrix was busy glaring at Hagrid who was dragging in a large Christmas tree.

“I hate Christmas.” She mumbled.

“Hmmm?” Rita said looking up from the pile of papers she was scouring through, pointed glasses balancing on the tip of her nose.

“Nothing. What are you working on anyways? Wasn’t our last assignment due yesterday?”

Rita nodded. “It was. This is more of a personal project of mine.”

“Let me see.” Bellatrix responded while making a grab for the pile of papers.

“It’s not ready yet!” Rita laughed moving the papers quickly out of Bellatrix’s reach.

“At least tell me what it is.”

Rita rolled her eyes. “You are so annoying. It’s a magazine. Of sorts.”

Bellatrix noticed the playful twitch pulling at the other girls lips.

“What kind of magazine.”

Rolling her eyes and staring at Bellatrix again she explained: “A gossip magazine. I figure it would be interesting to have a pamphlet be hidden around the school with gossip about all the students. Anonymous contributions, interviews, that kind of thing.”

Bellatrix laughed. “what happens if people don’t want their business in the school magazine.”

Rita shrugged grinning playfully. “That’s their business. Though I suppose if they really didn’t want their information spread and I was to find a couple sickles behind the old green pot in greenhouse three I wouldn’t have a problem looking over some information.”

Bellatrix stared at Rita, mouth hanging open. “Merlin Rita. You’re pure evil.”

Rita just laughed as she began to pack up her stuff. “Thanks Trix.”

A glare from Bellatrix.

“But it doesn’t really matter because I don’t actually have any gossip yet. Most people don’t like having a first-year hand around listening to their business.”

As both girls walked back down to the dungeons Rita held out a small parcel to Bellatrix.

“Here. Since you’re leaving for winter hols soon.”

Bellatrix raised her eyebrows and took the gift.

“I didn’t get you anything.”

Rita shrugged “I know.” The blonde girl said the password and walked into the common room leaving Bellatrix surprised in the hallway.

She had to get her something. What would it say about the Black family if she couldn’t even get a gift for her dormmate? Hesitantly she opened the gift. It was the standard book of spells grade 2 and it had a note on the inside cover.

Since you are so obsessed with being ahead of everyone else, I thought you might enjoy staying ahead next year as well. Much love Trix – R. Skeeter

Grinning Bellatrix flipped through the book determined to find a spell she could impress her mother with on the way home.

As she walked with the book back to the library to practice she heard hushed voices coming from behind a tapestry.

“Arthur, I don’t know what we’re supposed to do.”

“It will be fine Molly, we can push the wedding up a bit and nobody will know.”

“I guess your right. But still it all feels so soon. With everything happening is this even the best time for a baby?”

Bellatrix gasped and the voices fell quiet. She rushed back the way she came and hurried to the dorm.

Rushing over to the desk she began to write on a parchment.

“Dear Rita. I am sorry to inform you that you are mistaken in believing I did not get you a Christmas gift. Though it is a bit unconventional I thought you may appreciate receiving the first bit of information for your magazine the day before winter holidays when all the students are restless for something interesting to happen. Perhaps it will come to a surprise to you that the golden girl of Gryffindor tower Molly Prewett is currently pregnant with Arthur Weasley’s baby. Not only making her a blood traitor but an unwed teenage mother. Do with this information what you will. Kind Regards and Happy Christmas. – B.Black

She hurriedly rushed over to Rita's bed and handed her the parchment. Rita read it over, eyes gleaming as she reached the end.

"Do you think we could have the magazine ready by tomorrow?" She mused.

"It would cause such a stir right before everyone left."

Bellatrix nodded, "Yes I'm sure we could."

"Zabini" Rita called out.

The Dark haired girl poked her face out from her bed curtains. "Yes"

"Do you think you could do up a drawing of Molly Prewet for me."

Zabini's eyes twinkled. "What do I get out of it?"

"A portion of the profits of course."

"Fifty percent?"

"Twenty five."

"Thirty?"

"Fine, but it needs to be done tonight."

"I'll start right away."

And with that Zabini began to sketch away.

Rita turned to look at Bellatrix.

"Best Christmas gift ever Trix."

Bellatrix opened her mouth to argue against the Nickname but Rita hugged her causing Bellatrix to freeze up.

"Yes. Well let me know what I can do to help."

"If you can copy the articles after I write them that would be great seeing as your best at charms." The glint in her eye came back. "And if you can set a levitation charm on them in the great hall tomorrow as our method of delivery."

Bellatrix nodded as Rita put on her pointed glasses and began to scribble away.

Chapter 7 - Woven Webs of Opacity

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The great hall's doors swung open for breakfast at six that morning and bleary-eyed students filed in. Most had bleak stares and steaming cups of tea in their hands. Their gazes were fixed on steaming cups of tea and hot bowls of porridge. This means that the three first years practically buzzing with excitement at the Slytherin table were generally ignored.

"Did you do it?" Rita whispered into Bellatrix's ear.

"Yeah. Look up."

Tilting her head up slightly, Rita realized that the great hall's ceiling was covered with hundreds of slips of paper.

"Are you holding all those up with a levitation charm?"

Bellatrix nodded grinning, "Told you I'm good at charms."

Zabini leaned over, eyebrows furrowed. "What if they check wands for a levitation spell?"

"Already have that covered." Bellatrix assured her.

"While the commotion is happening when the pamphlets drop, I am going to do a levitation spell on your cup of tea. If any teachers check our wands, you and the other students will confirm that I was just trying to save you from having your tea spill all over you."

Rita's face lit up. "That's brilliant Trix." A glare. "Do you reckon there is enough students in the hall now?"

"Suppose so." Bellatrix mused, "Besides the stars of this month's edition have arrived." She said glaring at the two redheads at the Gryffindor table.

"Okay on three I'm going to end the levitation spell and Zabini you're going to drop your cup."

Both girls nodded.

"One."

"Two."

"Three."

“Finite incantem.” Bellatrix whispered at the same time that Zabini tipped her teacup.

“Wingardium Leviosia!” Bellatrix yelled loud enough that some other students turned to look at her. Perfect, now there was an alibi.

Pieces of parchment began to flutter down onto the four tables causing looks of interest to appear in the eyes of the formerly bored students.

Rita grabbed one from the air and all three girls admired their handiwork.

On the front page of the booklet was a drawing of Molly Prewett and a headline reading “Teen Mother and Blood Traitor.” Just above that read the title of the magazine. “The rumor mill.”

Flipping open the booklet the girls eagerly read Rita’s handiwork.

“It would seem that the golden girl of Gryffindor tower is not so perfect as she would have you believe. While taking house points from students for roaming the halls past curfew during her rounds it would seem she has been doing some roaming of her own. With none other than Arthur Weasley known muggle born sympathizer and blood traitor. Does Molly Weasly sympathize with his blood-traitor ideology, and more importantly will she be planning to raise their child with the same ideals? That's right folks Molly Prewett is the unwed, pregnant, teenage, blood traitor of Gryffindor tower. For more news stay tuned into the rumor mill.”

Whispers overtook the great hall from students and teachers alike. Molly Prewett stood up covering her mouth and muffling the sounds of her sobs as she fled the great hall, Arthur hot on her heels.

Dumbledore stood up from his chair and voice booming announced “All third year and above students are to report to their heads of house for a wand check. Gossip and defamation will never be encouraged or tolerated at Hogwarts. Please take a moment to consider the pain of your actions if you are the perpetrator and come forward.”

Slughorn walked over to the Slytherin table and announced, “All first and second years please go to class as usual, third years and above please come here.”

As the girls sat up to go, he spoke again. “If you were in some way responsible for this please come forward now.”

Nobody moved but several Slytherins had smirks on their faces clearly saying that even though they were not responsible they wished they had been a part of it.

Slughorn sighed. “Very well. I will examine wands now. First and second years are excused.”

The girls left and as soon as they were out of earshot, began to giggle.

“That was perfect.” Rita gasped.

“Merlin, did you see her face.” Zabini agreed.

“It was impressive, and we didn’t even have our wands checked” Bellatrix admitted.

“You should get to work over hols Rita.” She continued. “Spread the word today that the author will take anonymous contributions and work on it over Christmas. That way we can make a new issue when we get back.”

Rita grinned. “I’ll get to work. Amazing ideas as usual Trix.”

“Don't call..” Bellatrix was unable to finish before Rita ran off.

She hated that nickname.

Chapter End Notes

it's giving gossip girl, it's giving mean girls, it's giving please remember bellatrix and rita are not good people and they will only get worse from here. Thanks for reading <3

Chapter 8 - Put Me In a Bad Light

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bellatrix woke up feeling disoriented. Shooting up in bed it took her a moment to realize that she was back at her family estate. She jumped again at the sight of the house elf in their home.

“Is miss needing me to brush her hair?”

Bellatrix nodded, moving to vanity as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes.

Grabbing her wand, she cast tempus. 6:45 am. She was going to be late for breakfast at this rate.

“Brush it quickly and get my clothes.” She snapped at the elf.

The elf rushed around the room grabbing Bellatrix’s clothes and then ran the brush through Bellatrix’s hair. The elf was not as good at it as Rita was.

After dressing Bellatrix rushed down the main staircase and into the dining room. Her mother was at the head of the table and Andromeda was already sitting.

“Good morning mother.” Bellatrix said, lowering her eyes from her mother’s which were flashing with fury. “I apologize for my lack of punctuality.”

Her mother pursed her lips but did not seem to be too angry. “Sit. I suppose I cannot be too angry as you are not the latest of my children today.”

As if summoned by the comment Narcissa came rushing into the room, wild blonde hair framing face. She made to sit down but Druella’s harsh “Wait.” Rang through the large room.

Narcissa looked up at her mother looking like a small animal just realizing it had been caught by a predator.

“Come here child.”

Slowly Narcissa made her way towards her mother, stopping just outside of her mother’s reach.

“How old are you Narcissa?”

Narcissa looked up to meet her mother's gaze. "Seven." she whispered.

"Speak up!" Snapped Druella.

"Seven." Narcissa responded firmly.

"Bellatrix." Her mother commanded, turning her stony gaze. "At seven years of age were you able to arrive at breakfast on time and ensure your appearance was appropriate of a Black."

Bellatrix nodded firmly holding her mother's gaze. "Of course."

Druella nodded appeased by Bellatrix's confidence. "Narcissa I would expect the same from you."

"It won't happen again mother, I assure you."

"I should hope not." Her mother responded coldly. "Since you have deemed it appropriate to waste our mealtime waiting around for you, I suppose you won't have a problem waiting until supper to eat again."

Bellatrix watched Narcissa's lip tremble as she nodded to her mother.

"You are excused." Said Druella waving her hand to dismiss her youngest daughter. Narcissa fled the room and Bellatrix cleared her throat.

"When will father be here mother?" She noticed the way her mother's shoulders tensed for a moment. Oh dear.

"That is none of your business child. You just be sure you are ready for your next term."

Bellatrix bowed her head. "Of course, mother. I apologize."

When she glanced up, she was shocked to see that she had been graced with her mother's tight-lipped smile.

"I have been told that you have proved to be exceptional at school this last term."

"Yes mother, top of my class."

"Excellent." Her mother said. "Keep that up. A Black should always be excellent. No matter what they do."

"Of course, mother." Bellatrix agreed. "May I be excused?"

Her mother gave her a curt nod and Bellatrix recognized that the moment was over.

She left the cold dining room feeling the warm glow of the rare praise she had just received. She moved to the family library and sat replaying her mother's words. "Excellent" She was excellent, even her own mother thought so.

She sat basking in the praise until Andromeda walked into the room.

"What are you so happy about? Mother's little comment?"

Scowling Bellatrix got up to leave. "Jealous?" She snapped at her sister as she got up to leave.

"No. Disappointed."

Bellatrix froze but refused to turn and look at her sister.

"You would let your sister suffer for a glimmer of attention from mother."

Bellatrix scoffed. "Praise is far and few between. It is not my fault Narcissa falls short. I will not lower myself to her level to make you comfortable."

"Stop being so cruel." Andromeda whispered as Bellatrix began to leave.

"Stop being so soft." Bellatrix bit back.

She spent the rest of the day in her room.

Chapter End Notes

Me when I give the black sisters my mommy issues. Thanks for reading <3

Chapter 9 - Deck The Halls We Once Walked Through

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bellatrix sat with her mother on the stiff and hard couch in the lounge. She was in a foul mood having been woken up an hour earlier than usual to begin getting ready for the Christmas party.

Her two sisters appeared from the grand doors at the other end of the room. As her mother got up to examine Narcissa Andromeda walked up to Bellatrix.

“Busy kissing up to mother again Bella?”

Bellatrix turned her glare towards her sister. “Having trouble living up to mother’s expectations dear sister?”

Andromeda frowned but Bellatrix saw the tears clouding her eyes.

“Look Andy I’m not trying to do anything like that. You just have to do what she says.”

Andromeda rolled her eyes and pushed her sister's hand away as she went to fix the collar of the dress she was wearing. “I can do it myself. It’s not as easy as you make it sound. How do you not get angry?”

“Of course, I get angry.” Bellatrix laughed, “I’m a Black. But I know it’s better to play along with her power games than get punished. It doesn’t get anyone ahead.”

Andromeda sighed wistfully, “if only it were that easy for me.”

“It will come in time.” Bellatrix assured her.

“Girls.” Came their mother’s harsh voice from the hallway.

“Hurry up, you need to practice the dances for the evening before our guests arrive.”

An hour later the three girls sat on the floor, brows glistening and cool glasses of water in hand.

“Again.” their mother commanded sharply. They got up and ran through the dance again. Bellatrix swirled around the ballroom, imaginary partner in hand. She jumped at the creak of the wooden doors opening and someone walking through.

“Cygnus.”

“Druella”

“You are three days late.”

“I’m the one who runs the family business. I decide when I arrive.”

All three girls had stopped dancing, choosing to watch their parents who glared at each other from other side of the room instead. Bellatrix swore she could feel their magic sparking in the air.

After several seconds of pointed staring Druella's heeled shoes echoed through the room’s vaulted ceilings as they clicked on the marble. As she reached her husband, she reached her hand out and he bent his head down to kiss her hand.

“I am delighted to see you, my lord.” Druella said boredom and distaste dripping from her tongue.

“And you as well my dear.” Cygnus responded, not even bothering to look at his wife.

“Would you like to greet your daughter who is home from school?”

He nodded gruffly and turned towards his three daughters, all standing tense from the situation.

Bellatrix bowed her head at once kicking Andromeda’s heel to remind her to do the same.

“Hello father.” They mumbled almost in sequence.

“Bellatrix.” Her father commanded, voice booming through the room. “I hear you have done well this term.”

“Yes father. Though perhaps only well to the average witch’s standards. I understand the exceptional is expected.” This was the time to impress him, she realized. “I have taken it upon myself to start learning spells for next year as well so I may stay ahead.”

Her father raised his eyebrows for a moment and Bellatrix relished the surprise she had managed to create.

“Well done child.” He nodded and turned to greet his other two daughters.

Bellatrix looked up after her father had passed and felt herself freeze under her mother’s gaze. It was an unmistakable look of pride.

After her father had exited the room Druella had the other girls run through the dance once more and called Bellatrix over.

“When asked about your time at Hogwarts this year how will you respond?”

“I have enjoyed the opportunity to learn and be exposed to a new environment.” Said Bellatrix, a fake smile plastering her face.

“Perfect my child.” Her mother whispered.

“Your’ sisters may have yet to prove themselves, but you know what it takes to be a Black.”

Bellatrix worked to suppress her grin “Yes I believe I do mother.”

Then Bellatrix nearly jumped as her mother placed a hand on her shoulder. She almost never received physical affection from anyone, let alone her mother who was as cold as the Slytherin dungeons.

“You will do well child.”

“Thank you.” Bellatrix whispered.

Chapter End Notes

sister angst and mommy issues. atp its an autobiography. Thanks as always for reading <3

Chapter 10 - What If I Told You I'm a Mastermind

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Trix!”

Bellatrix cringed at the nickname and hug that the blonde girl had just thrown at her.

“How was your Christmas?”

“Fine. Lots of family.”

Rita frowned, slinging an arm over Bellatrix’s shoulder which Bellatrix shrugged off. “Say no more.”

“Anyways, I had a brilliant time. I spread the word to all my acquaintances that I had heard that if you put anonymous rumors in the helmet of that suit of armor near the kitchens you might be in the next edition of the rumor mill.”

Bellatrix grinned at the thought of their little project. “So that’s still on then.”

“Of course!” Rita laughed. “Though it’s gonna be hard to top our first edition.”

“I actually had an idea for that.”

Rita’s eyes glinted. “Do share.”

“I think the method of distribution should be different each time. It keeps things interesting, but it also makes it harder to catch whoever could be writing the cruel rumors.”

Rita nodded solemnly “I don’t know what I’d do without you Trix.”

“Don’t call me that.” Bellatrix said.

“It'll grow on you.” Rita assured her.

Bellatrix rolled her eyes.

When the girls got to the dorm Zabini and Carrow were already there.

“Welcome back ladies.” Greeted Zabini. “How was your Christmas.”

“Good.” Bellatrix responded.

“Brilliant.” Said Rita. “How was yours.”

“Not so great. But my bad holidays were made better when I checked our donation pot.”

Zabini pulled out several pieces of parchment and a handful of galleons.

“Twelve galleons total. And most of these are requests for things to put in not things to leave out.”

“Oh brilliant!” Said Rita, grinning as she and Zabini began reading over the requests.

Bellatrix locked eyes with Carrow who was watching both girls.

“A word Alecto?”

The stocky girl got up and walked towards Bellatrix.

“I couldn’t help but notice you aren't very involved in this little project.”

“I suppose not.”

Bellatrix nodded, flipping her wand through her fingers absentmindedly. “Right, well I suppose what I’m really saying is you aren't very involved in this little project of ours, but you are very aware of it.”

Alecto raised an eyebrow giving a haughty look towards Bellatrix. “What an intelligent observation Black.”

Bellatrix nodded “Yes, I thought so too. Here’s the thing Alecto. You’re a nice enough girl and you come from a good family. I’m sure it’s old enough that it has some secrets and I’m sure you know how to keep them. However, my family has the largest and most ancient magical library in Britain. I can assure you I know more about your family than you think.”

Alecto scowled at Bellatrix and moved closer “What exactly are you implying here Black?”

Bellatrix shrugged moving towards her own bed. “Nothing much Alecto. Just pointing out how if you run your mouth, I might be inclined to run mine. And I’m currently helping run a very prolific gossip magazine.”

With that she flashed that fake Black smile she had mastered so well in Carrow’s direction and climbed into bed.

She could’ve sword she heard muffled giggles coming from Rita’s bed and realized the other two girls had heard the whole ordeal.

The next morning the girls got dressed and Rita wordlessly grabbed a brush pulling it through Bellatrix's tangled hair.

"Merlin Trix. I don't know how you can handle having this rat's nest on your head."

Scowling at the comment Bellatrix reached her arm up meaning to swat Rita but the small girl jumped out of the way quickly laughing to herself.

"Stop attacking me and get dressed. I am not going to be late for old Sluggy because you are an unkempt girl."

Staring at the other girl with a mock look of offence Bella began to tie her tie and then look for her cauldron and potions book.

The girls got to class and Slughorn greeted them with a jovial smile. "Ms. Skeeter and Black! As usual my earliest students."

They both mumbled a good morning to Slughorn and sat at their shared desk, watching while Slughorn wrote the potion for the day on the board.

As they set up their ingredients Rita playfully moved around the ingredients Bellatrix was so carefully organizing laughing at the other girl's obsession with orderliness.

The rest of the students streamed in and Slughorn began the class.

"Welcome back students, I trust you all had a good break?"

Murmurs of acknowledgement came from the children and Slughorn nodded at a frumpy looking girl who had her hand raised.

"Ms. Umbridge?"

"Yes Professor, I was just wondering if the people who made that pamphlet before break were caught?"

Slughorn rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly.

"Well, no Ms. Umbridge they haven't been caught. But the heads of house have all agreed that we should all try to talk about it as little as possible. It's likely this was just the creation

of some bored students, and it will not happen again."

Rita and Bellatrix shared a smirk at that. Bored students no clever and cruel. Probably.

They finished their potion first and won ten house points for Slytherin.

"At this point we're gonna take the cup!" Whispered Rita excitedly.

They walked to the library and once they were settled there Bellatrix pulled out a notebook.

"Can I interest you in something a little more fascinating than homework?"

"Always." Said Rita eagerly pushing her books out of the way.

"I have an idea for the distribution of our next edition."

Chapter End Notes

10 chapters! that means we are 5% of the way there. Right now i'm working part time and in college part time so a chapter every day or two is the best I can manage.
Thanks for reading <3

Chapter 11 - I Don't Remember

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rita, Bellatrix and Zabini were gleefully whispering to each other as the left charms later that week.
The throng of students headed to lunch began to slow and the girls realized their plan had come to fruition. Some of the seventh years behind the three girls pushed through the crowd.

“What’s going on here?” One of the older
girls asked.
The students’ quiet whispers began to buzz and even the prefects began to look at the tapestries lining the halls.

The three Slytherin girls had spent the last week transfiguring all the tapestries as they walked by with a mix of a copying spell and a timer spell all set for today. This meant that the tapestries had changed and caused quite a commotion.

Every single one of them read out the new issue of The Rumor Mill.
The top half of the tapestries read “Students speak!” and below that were quotation marks filled with rumors that had the first years blushing and the seventh years jaws practically touching the floor.

“Oh Circe!” Rita laughed. “This is better than the first time.”
Students began to read out quips from the tapestries as they walked through the halls.

“Rosmerta will sell alcohol to third years and up and Professor McGonagall turns a blind eye.”

Rosmerta turned bright red a spluttered “That’s not true!” It may as well have fallen on deaf ears.

“Lestrange’s parents had to donate extra money to the library this year so he could retake his OWL’s for the third time.”
Bellatrix giggled at that one because she knew for a fact it was true.

Some of the ones they had picked from the submissions had been a little more far fetched but still entertaining, such as the one that read,

“Fabian Prewett had his first kiss with Peeves.” This caused peals of laughter and a grin from Fabian who shrugged and said, “I can neither confirm nor deny.”

“Oh my god this is too funny.” Said a muggleborn near the girls.

Zabini got closer to the girl “I know right! I wonder who’s doing it?” The girl shrugged. “No idea. But I heard they take submissions.” She wiggled her eyebrows and winked at Zabini “The suit of armor near the kitchens. Y’know in case you want to keep the rumor mill flowing.”

Rita and Bellatrix stared at Zabini in surprise and broke into a fit of laughter.

“Free advertising.” Rita whispered into Bellatrix’s ear.

As they neared the great hall Rita nudged her “This is one of the bests ones.”

“Dolores Umbridge brought a toad to school and kisses it goodnight every evening.”

Peals of laughter broke out at that mostly from the first years and Dolores marched into the Great Hall headed straight for the teachers table practically radiating fury.

“Say, do you reckon we should remove the writings from the tapestry so that nobody gets in trouble.” Said Bellatrix rather loudly.

Murmurs of agreement came from most of the students despite the prefects protests and whispers of “Reparo.” Could be heard all over the main hall.

When Minerva McGonagall came storming through the doors with Dolores close behind, she looked furious. However there was no proof the magazine had appeared again.

“What is the meaning of this Miss Umbridge?” she said sternly. “I do not appreciate having my time wasted.”

Dolores looked around, bewildered. “No Professor I swear the tapestries were full of rumors.”

McGonagall stared down the students waiting to go in for lunch. “Was there another edition of the gossip magazine?” She questioned, holding eye contact with a couple of the students she suspected.

Some of the seventh years shook their heads, leading the other students to follow their example.
“No professor.”
“Of course not.”
“We would let you know if that happened.”

Dolores looked around in shock at the other students and pointed at one of the Hufflepuff prefects (Bones maybe. Bellatrix thought)
“You! I know you saw it. Don’t lie you’re a prefect.”
The Hufflepuff shrugged, “Didn’t see anything. Sorry Umbridge.”

Throwing her hands up in the air Umbridge stormed off and Minerva pinched the bridge of her nose.

“I do not wish to hear anything else about this magazine. Please. Now resume your days as usual.”

The three girls walked to the Slytherin table too eat, a satisfied smirk on each of their faces.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you guys enjoyed! <3

Chapter 12 - Lights and Voices Blinding

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"We should take a break until the fall I think." Rita mused, staring at Bellatrix who was sitting on her own bed.
"Why?"
"Build anticipation."
"I guess"
"I mean, I just want this to last the whole time I'm at Hogwarts Y'know."
Bellatrix stared at her thoughtfully. "Yeah, I do get it."

Smiling Rita motioned to Bellatrix. "Come here I want to try something new with your hair."

Bellatrix came over and sat at the side of Rita's bed while Rita began threading her fingers through the long black strands. First detangling them, then separating, then finally weaving them together and leaving Bellatrix with two long plaits hanging down her back.

By the time she had finished the room had gotten significantly darker, meaning the natural lighting from the great lake was gone. It must have taken her a long time to sort out Trix's long hair realized Rita.

Bellatrix ran her fingers over them exploratorily. "I like them." She whispered.
Rita smiled "It will help tame those crazy curls of yours."

Bellatrix frowned. "I like my curls!"
Rita shrugged giving Bellatrix a shove towards her own bed. "Then take care of them."
Frowning Bellatrix crawled into her bed and almost immediately fell asleep.
"There's a difference between walking around with curly hair and walking around with a giant puffball on your head." She heard Rita laugh as she drifted off.

Bellatrix woke early the next morning and gently undid the braids Rita had put in. She pulled her hair back and tied it with a ribbon and then grabbed her parchment, ink, quill, and books.

She crept out of the common room where many fifth and seventh years had fallen asleep with their faces in books or ink smudged across their face. Bellatrix felt grateful that she only had to worry about her first exam and not OWL's or NEWT's.

She got to the library right as it unlocked at six and was surprised to see about ten students already waiting at the door. As they all walked in bleary eyed, she located an empty table and began to work.

The studying passed in a blur. Her eyes were blurring over every couple of seconds and her head was pounding but she just had to finish this chapter on the Goblin Revolution and then she could take a break. As if on cue her stomach began to growl.

Finally snapping the book shut she cast a tempus only to find out it was 2pm. Oh Merlin. She had been studying for six hours and had now missed breakfast and lunch.

“Guess I’ll just get back to it then.” she muttered, opening her history book again in a decidedly worse mood.
She had only gotten a couple of sentences in when she was interrupted by someone sitting at her table. She was about to snap at whoever had sat in the space she was clearly using when she realized it was Rita. And she had brought her some toast and a cup of tea.

“Gods you’re a lifesaver.” She mumbled to Rita in between the bite of the toast she had immediately grabbed from Rita.
“And you are insane.” Responded the other girl. “Why the hell are you studying as hard as an OWL student for a first-year exam. I’m pretty sure they legally have to let you pass.”

Bellatrix shrugged. “I can’t just pass. I must be the best.”
Rita nodded, lip twitching. “Oh I see. Perfectly reasonable goal. No pressure at all.”
Bellatrix glared at her. “Yeah, well try telling that to my family. Now unless you’re gonna shut up any time soon it’s time for you to depart.”

Rita stopped for a moment pretending to consider her options. “While the idea of being silent for hours on end while you rip your hair out is intriguing I think I’m destined for more interesting things on this fine day.”

Bellatrix shrugged now sipping her tea. “Suit yourself.”
“I will! Bye Trix!” She called out grinning at the way Bellatrix scowled at the nickname.

Chapter End Notes

I made a playlist for this work if you want to check it out. It's what I listen to while I write but each song also describes a certain character/relationship really well.
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=927a05c8cdb94728

Chapter 13 - We Team Up

Chapter Notes

Here's the spotify playlist for this fic <3
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=06053357c5ad4701

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“My Eldest daughter, Your’ father and I send our congratulatory remarks on you achieving top marks in all of your exams. Well done. We anticipate your return on the first of July. Kind regards Druella and Cygnus Black.”

Below the looping cursive was the Black family seal. Bellatrix smiled at the letter, folding it up and placing it in the bottom of her trunk.

“You have big plans for this summer Trix?” Rita came out from her bed where she was haphazardly throwing clothes into her trunk with no rhyme or reason.

Bellatrix threw a piece of Rita’s clothing that had travelled to her bed at the other girl’s head.

“Yes, figuring out a way to get you to stop calling me that.”

Rita let out a gleeful laugh at that. “Never gonna happen.”

Scowling Bellatrix went back to folding her own laundry and neatly packing it. She hadn’t thought she would be this upset about going home. However, now that term was over, sunlight was peeking through the common room in golden tendrils, and she had to think about a summer stuck at her estate with her stone-cold mother she couldn’t help but wish she had savored the year more.

“Let’s go for a walk.” Rita urged Bellatrix. “I don’t want to spend the last day of our first-year moping around in our rooms.

“Alright.” Bellatrix agreed. “Zabini? Interested in a walk?”

The other girl nodded and as they left knocked on the wooden post of Alecto’s bed.

“You coming?” she asked through the closed curtains of the other girl’s bed.

A grunt. Zabini turned to them, a small smile on her face. “I’m taking that as a yes.”

They waited for Carrow to get out of bed and began making their way through the common room.

There were some seventh years crying in the corner, no doubt mourning their loss of childhood. Bellatrix rolled her eyes at them and rolled her eyes again at the more foolish of her peers who were spending their last day running around, screeching, and generally making a rather large annoyance of themselves.

They walked up the cold stone steps and arrived on the main floor of the castle. The quiet peace the Slytherin’s had with saying goodbye was not a sentiment shared by the rest of the castle.

Gryffindor’s especially seemed determined to throw the loudest and busiest goodbye to the castle yet. They ran around with gold and red streamers flowing behind them. They had charmed some of the suits of armor to cheer: “Go, Go, Gryffindor!”

“As if they’re going to win the cup.” Alecto whispered viciously.

Bellatrix muttered her agreement at that. Gryffindor enjoyed the antics too much to earn more points than they lost. As the gems stood right now Slytherin was clearly ahead by a hundred points.

Walking out of the castle and towards the secluded yard near the caretakers’ ground the girls began to discuss their year. They spent the day laughing and recalling the brilliance of the Rumor Mill. As the afternoon sun began to dip Zabini suggested they dip their feet in the lake and the other girls agreed quickly.

When they arrived at the lake, they realized most of the students had the same idea. There nearest to the lake was a large group of Gryffindor’s, many sporting messy red hair.

“Oh good, The blood traitors.” Whispered Rita.

Bellatrix’s eyes widened and she smacked Rita’s arm. As the sun sat in the middle of the sky, causing the great lake to appear ten times brighter than usual and the ginger hair of Molly

Prewett to glow brighter, Arthur Weasley got down on one knee and pulled out a flickering engagement ring.

“Oh Merlin.” Bellatrix whispered into Rita’s ears. “The blood traitors are going to get married and have a bunch of blood traitor babies.”

“Gross.” Rita agreed, pretending to gag as Molly tearfully nodded her head, pulling Arthur up to kiss him.

Zabini looked over to where Dumbledore and McGonagall were watching the display. “That’s weird. They aren’t normally so invested in student relationships.”

Carrow nodded, staring at the pair suspiciously.

“I’m sure it’s nothing.” Rita assured them both. “Let’s head to Dinner.”

The four girls eagerly dug into the feast in front of them, which seemed to be even more extravagant than usual in honor of their last day. Students all around the hall ate eagerly and eventually out came the deserts. Bellatrix kept her eyes on the teacher’s table where McGonagall was whispering to Dumbledore again.

Students around the hall slowly began to stop eating and focus their attention on the main table. Every table was waiting for the announcement of the winner of the cup.

Dumbledore stood up and the hall fell silent. “I’d like to announce the winner of the house cup for 1962, but first.” Students looked around at each other confused.

“For the bravery of withstanding adverse gossip and cruel rumors I would like to award Molly Prewett and Arthur Weasley each 50 house points.”

Bellatrix snapped her head to look at Rita rage pooling inside her. Unbelievable. How could he do that? That would make the house cup Gryffindor’s.

Shouts of anger chorused from all over the hall besides the Gryffindors who were busy screaming their heads off.

The whole of Slytherin table was shouting at Dumbledore who simply shrugged and sat watching the table with twinkling eyes.

Bellatrix watched him then realized. “He knows. He knows it was a Slytherin who started the Rumor Mill and he’s punishing everyone.”

Rita stared at her mouth falling open as she realized she was right.

“Merlin. What do we do.”

Bellatrix stared at her lips twitching up, “We make him pay next year.”

“Brilliant.” Whispered Rita.

At that point Alecto muttered a levitation charm on her pumpkin juice and hovered it over to above Dumbledore’s head. Many of the Slytherins’ eyes were now darting above Dumbledore’s head and their table to see who the perpetrator was.

Nobody warned Dumbledore in time and Alecto ended the spell. Pumpkin juice spilled all over the Headmaster and the Slytherin table erupted into gales of laughter.

Professor McGonagall rushed to the headmaster immediately casting a scourgify “Really now!” She shouted out “Have a bit of sportsmanship.”

“Tell that to Dumbledore!” An older Slytherin called out.

“Yeah, remind us of what house he was in when he went to Hogwarts? Oh right Gryffindor.” At that announcement a second chorus of shouting came from the Slytherin table.

“You keep your mouth shut about him!” Gideon Prewitt shouted from the Gryffindor table.

It was inevitable really, Bellatrix realized afterwards on the train ride home.

A scone was launched across the hall and hit Gideon straight in the face. Barely blinking he picked up a whole pumpkin pie and threw it back.

The heads of houses rushed towards their tables, attempting to calm the students who were now throwing food at anyone who was not wearing their house colors.

After several minutes of sitting back amused Dumbledore's voice boomed through the hall

"Until you are the headmaster, you may keep your judgments of how I do my job to yourself. Now I recommend all student leave and gather their things before you all miss your train."

"That was wicked." Rita said grinning at Bellatrix. Then her smile softening as they left their dorm for the last time until fall, "I'm gonna miss you this summer Trix."

"Don't call me that." Bellatrix shot back, no real bite in her words.

Chapter End Notes

Oh my God! First year done and we are at 10,000 words. Meaning I've written 10k words in 7 days. Pretty impressed with that.
Thanks as always for reading<3

Chapter 14 - Punish Me For Things I Never Did

Chapter Notes

Hey lovelies - TW FOR MILD PHYSICAL VIOLENCE - if that's triggering to you please skip this chapter <3
here's the spotify playlist for this fic:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=5868e65106794fdb

The train ride home had been fun at first, all three girls laughing and teasing, but as they realized the trip was almost over a tension filled the air.

“I’m gonna be dead.” Carrow muttered. “I dumped a glass of pumpkin juice on my headmaster’s head.”

“They can’t prove it.” Rita assured her.

“They’ll know.” Carrow muttered darkly.

Bella felt fear rush through her like ice. They would know. Somehow her parents would know she had something to do with this.

Suddenly her summer was looking for a lot worse.

Druella and Cygnus had been waiting for Bellatrix as the Hogwarts Express arrived, both of their faces cold and unfeeling.

Bellatrix hurriedly pulled her trunk out of the compartment and said a quick goodbye to the other three girls and rushed towards her displeased parents. She walked in between them and they both grabbed one of her elbows, apparating away.

They appeared in the main lounge of the family estate and Bellatrix took a breath steadying her stomach from the surprise of the apparition.

“Sit.” Her father commanded.

She immediately went over to the couch.

Druella stood pacing the room and Bellatrix knew she was in trouble. What they were angry about she could already guess. The loss of the house cup, the magazine, the food fight. All unbecoming of a Black.

“Do you care to explain the loss of the House Cup this year?” Her father demanded coldly.

Bellatrix suppressed her still fresh rage from the incident.

“We had a 100-point lead until dinner when Dumbledore awarded Prewett and Weasley points for the bravery of having a bastard blood traitor child.”

Druella’s nostrils flared at the mention of another pureblood line becoming tainted.

“Oh I knew the Weasley’s needed to get a reign on that boy.”

“Shut up Druella.” Her father snapped.

Druella’s cold eyes snapped towards her husband’s but she held her tongue as he continued.

“While home for Christmas Holidays you failed to mention the student magazine going around the castle.”

Bellatrix cursed herself and breathed in through her nose and out through her mouth, trying to keep her face bored and relaxed.

“I didn’t think it was of relevance.”

Smack.

“That is enough insolence.” Her mother’s voice rang out as she returned to the pacing.

Bellatrix closed her mouth quickly and willed her tears away.

“I’m sorry I didn’t think to mention it sooner. It was dealt with the by the teacher’s and I didn’t want to bother you with foolish school antics.”

Her father stared at her, grey eyes showing no emotion.

“You will not engage with your sisters. You will go to your room and consider the ways you have brought shame to your family and Slytherin house by encouraging this behavior. Allow that magazine to continue and it could be our reputation it goes after.”

She nodded, holding her chin up high. She refused to let either of them have the satisfaction of seeing her emotions.

“Yes father, I apologize for my conduct.” She bowed her head and waited for his acknowledgement.

“You are excused.” He said abruptly.

As soon as she left the room she leaned against the wooden wall for support and let out a shuddering breath. Her cheek stung badly and her pride was in even worse shape. Even if the magazine wasn’t her fault which she knew it was, how was she supposed to stop Dumbledore for being a corrupt old bastard.

It wasn’t her fault. It wasn’t fair.

The tears flowed freely as she walked towards her room, ignoring the delighted cries from her sisters when they saw her. She pulled their hugging arms away and locked herself in her room not even looking at them.

Once the tears stopped, she sat in her bed staring straight ahead at the mirror. After a year of learning and making new friends, when she looked in the mirror she was once again stuck in her cold unfeeling home, feeling quite cold and unfeeling herself.

She let out a choking sob. Nothing had ever changed and maybe, it never would.

Chapter 15 - I Think Your House Is Haunted

Chapter Notes

Here's the spotify playlist for this story <3
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=51f4408a31b448f6

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“It’s fine Cissy. She’s just in a bad mood. We’ll say hi later.” Andromeda said, giving her younger sister a reassuring smile.

The younger girl smiled and skipped away but Andromeda stayed staring at her sister’s door.

She knew her parents had been angry about something that happened at school and though she felt guilty about it, she couldn’t help but feel happy about the fact that Bellatrix was the one in trouble for once.

“Honey!” She called out. A crack and the house elf appeared.

“Hi honey,” Andromeda began, giving the elf a small smile. “How are you?”

The elf gave her a small smile in return. “I is being happy to serve you miss. What is you having me do?”

Andromeda’s smile dropped a bit. No matter how hard she tried the elves always seemed to stay afraid of her.

“Could you bring me a small supper from the kitchens please.”

“Of course miss.” The elf responded nodding her head quickly, “I is doing this right away.”

A crack told Andromeda the elf had gone but she didn’t take her eyes of the oaked door to her sisters room.

“Bella.” Nothing. “It’s Andy. Come on, let me in.”

She heard the whisper of a spell and then the click of a lock. She placed a delicate and pale hand on the bronze doorknob and turned it gently.

Her sister was sitting on her bed, gaze cold and hard. Andromeda got onto the bed next to her and rested her head on her sister's shoulder not saying a word.

Bellatrix's gaze met hers in the mirror, and Bellatrix whispered barely audible "It's not fair."

"I know." Andromeda whispered back.

They sat there leaning against each other, the only sounds in the room being the steady rise and fall of their synched breathing.

"I missed you." Andromeda said looking up into her surprised sister's eyes. "They're a lot more angry when you're not around."

Bellatrix lip twitched a bit at that. "That's because I try to follow the rules. Unlike someone I could mention. And anyways you're coming with me in the fall. So don't worry about them."

"What about Cissa?"

"She'll be fine."

Andromeda nodded though her stomach twisted with guilt at the thought of leaving her baby sister alone in this angry house.

A crack of apparition broke her from her stupor.

Honey had returned with a plate loaded with enough food for both girls. "Here is your food miss. I is going back to work now."

Andromeda smiled and began to respond "Tha..." But was cut off by another crack of apparition.

"They won't let me be nice to them." Muttered Andromeda.

"Just leave it Andy." Bellatrix assured her as she nibbled at a piece of toast.

After the girls had eaten they both lay on Bellatrix's bed staring up at her canopy, which had been charmed to show constellations.

"That one's mine." Bellatrix said, pointing to a cluster of stars.

"it's nice." Andromeda said staring peacefully at where Bellatrix had pointed.

Bellatrix shrugged. "It's kind of sad really. It's the third brightest star in Orion's constellation."

Andromeda looked at her sister with furrowed brows. "Why does that matter?"

"Narcissa was named after someone so beautiful he couldn't keep his own eyes off himself and you have the whole galaxy next to us to call yours. I'm destined to be the third best out of all of us."

Andromeda stared at her sister whose grey eyes were welling with tears. Her red lips trembled and a singular tear fell down her porcelain cheek.

"They're just names Bellatrix. We choose our own lives. Plus I don't want to have a galaxy alone. I'd be far to sad to ever leave you. You're stuck with me forever."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

They fell asleep on the same bed that night holding tight to each other until Druella instructed a house elf to move Andromeda back to her own bed later that night.

Chapter End Notes

crying at them promising to never leave each other. But on a happy note we have Andromeda's pov as well now! Thanks as always for reading <3

Chapter 16 - Cause They See Right Through Me

Chapter Notes

Here's the spotify playlist for this fic:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=a724c7a36f044d15

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andromeda waved at Narcissa, breath fogging up the glass of the train window as it began to pull away. Her grey eyes stayed fixed on hers until they were out of the station and only then did Andromeda pull her gaze from the English countryside.

“You’ll see her at Christmas.” Bellatrix said, noticing her sister’s concern. “She’ll be fine.”

“Anyways.” Bellatrix continued, not bothering to waste her time worrying about her younger sister.

“This is Rita Skeeter.” The blonde girl who had been whispering in Bellatrix’s ear earlier grinned at her, though the grin did not reach her piercing blue eyes.

“Hi Rita.” Mumbled Andromeda.

“This is Zabini. Don’t ask her first name she won’t tell you.”

The dark-skinned girl grinned playfully. “Don’t believe that for a second. I’ll tell people if they ask nicely. It’s just that your sister suffers from a tragic case of being a massive bitch.”

Andromeda held back a laugh as she saw her older sister’s steel eyes flash at the comment.

“I like you.” Andromeda said, shaking Zabini’s hand.

“Right well.” Bellatrix said a bit more unpleasantly than before “This is Alecto Carrow.”

“Hi.” Said the stocky girl, brushing her brown hair out of her face and shaking Andromeda’s hand.

“Hi.” Andromeda muttered. “It’s nice to meet you guys. I’m Andromeda but you can call me Andy.”

The Skeeter girl’s eyes flashed at that. She almost looked bug like for a second as she turned to Bellatrix.

“So other people in your family are fine with nicknames Trix?”

“Shut up.” Bellatrix muttered, and Rita laughed gleefully.

The train pulled slowly to a stop later that evening and Andromeda was left alone as the other girls walked to the horseless carriages. She was guided over to a boat with some other first years already in it by a giant man with a booming voice.

“In ye get. There ye are little one.” He said as he helped her climb in. They sailed across the great lake and Andromeda’s jaw dropped at the beauty of it.

The small boy next to her grinned “Pretty cool isn’t it.”

Andromeda nodded. “I mean I’ve heard about it of course. I just didn’t realize how wonderful it would be in person.”

The boy nodded. “I get it.”

They got off the boat and were immediately jostled by the horde of other students up to the front gate of the castle.

A very stern middle-aged woman walked up to the group. She spoke with a Scottish accent.

“Good evening first-years. I am Professor McGonagall, head of Gryffindor House. That is one of the four houses you can be sorted into here at Hogwarts. I would like you to all get in order for the sorting ceremony now. A to Z please.”

Andromeda waved to the boy she had been in the boat with as she headed towards the front of the boat.

They were ushered in their single file line into the great hall where Andromeda let out a loud gasp. From the constellations on the ceiling to the floating candles, everything was stunning. She stared at the Slytherin and gave her sister (who was watching her expectantly) a small wave.

Names were called out and eventually she was next in line. She felt her stomach drop at the nerve wracking though of having to sit in front of the whole school while being sorted. It was okay, she could do this.

“Andromeda Black.” McGonagall called out, and Andromeda held her chin up high as she marched towards the stool. The old hat was placed on her head and everything went quiet.

“You are a tough one.”

“Am I?”

“Yes. You have ambition. That much is clear.”

“Okay, so put me in Slytherin.”

“And you are as demanding as the rest of your family. But there is something else in you. A bravery and a kindness I have yet to see in a Black.”

“Put me in Slytherin.”

“Oh alright better be….”

“SLYTHERIN.” She blushed at the eyes of everyone on her as she stumbled over to the Slytherin table where her sister gave her a firm nod of approval.

She sat with the other first-years and pushed her food around on her plate unable to eat as she recovered from the stress of sorting. She felt like she had already passed the first of what she was sure would be many tests to impress her family with.

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading <3

Chapter 17 - Say You're Fine I Know You Better Than That

Chapter Notes

> Here's the spotify playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=3cd4ec94fcac46c4

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bellatrix stared at her sister as she stood in line to be sorted, the girl looked like she was about to throw up. It was only once she was sorted into Slytherin that Bellatrix felt able to relax.

Rita grinned at her “Making sure the family reputation stays intact?”

Bellatrix scowled at her. “That’s not funny.”

“Loosen up Trix.”

Bellatrix smacked her gently on the shoulder. “Don’t call me that.”

“You got it Trix.”

Rita dodged the smack that time.

“C’mon let’s go check the suit of armor before curfew.”

Bellatrix agreed and they got up.

“Want to come Zabini?”

Zabini shook her head. “That’s okay I’m gonna start unpacking.”

They began to walk towards the kitchens Rita chattering while Bellatrix mostly tuned her out, except for the occasional “mhhmm” or “Okay.”

Eventually Rita stared at her unimpressed. “You aren’t listening.”

“Wow. Took you a while.”

“What’s up.” Rita said, blue eyes looking up into Bellatrix’s, eyebrows furrowed.

Bellatrix shrugged. “I’ve only been away from home for a couple hours. Takes me awhile to recover from them.”

“Bad summer then?” Rita questioned.

“no worse than any other summer I’ve had. But yeah. Bad summer.”

As they neared the kitchens Rita grabbed Bellatrix’s hand and Bellatrix’s eyes shot up in surprise.

If she recognized the look of surprise on Bellatrix’s face Rita ignored it. “You have a whole term before you have to see them again. Focus on that.”

Bellatrix gave her a small smile and pointed to the suit of armor.

“There it is.”

“You grab the parchments from it.” Rita instructed, “And I’ll keep watch.”

She let go of Bellatrix’s hand and moved to the corner of the hallway, keeping an eye out.

Bellatrix lifted the helm of the suit of armor and pulled out a pile of loose sheets of parchment.

“Okay I got them.”

“Let’s go read them.” Rita said excitedly as she headed towards the dungeons.

They walked through the common room, which was more full and loud than usual and quickly made their way down to the lower level of the girls dormitory.

“Hi girls!” Rita called out, causing Zabini and Carrow to wave from where they sat on their respective beds.

“Got all unpacked?”

Zabini nodded.

“Yeah, didn’t bring as much this year. Mum was packing for me last year and made me bring so much stuff. I think I used maybe half of it.”

The other girls nodded laughing and Bellatrix felt a familiar twist in her stomach. It happened a lot when other girls talked about their mothers. How their mothers braided their hair, or sang them to sleep, or packed their trunks for school for them. She knew anger well, but this was a different kind. A painful kind. She hated it.

Rita seemed to notice her sudden change in mood.

“Want to plan how to get back at Dumbledore?”

Bellatrix grinned. “Of course.”

Both girls sat on the bed, Rita wearing her pointed glasses so she could write better.

“Okay. We could say that he and Minnie are secretly dating.”

Bellatrix shook her head. “It’s better if it’s something that happened. Something that would genuinely put a dent in his reputation.”

“Might not be something we can figure out tonight then.”

Bellatrix shrugged. “I guess, but lets try and think of what we could do to find that information.”

Rita’s eyes gleamed. “He has a brother, I think. Works at Hogsmeade.”

“How would we get to Hogsmeade?”

“Good point.”

“Don’t stress. We’ll figure something else out.”

“I guess so.” Rita said, looking rather discouraged.

“Want me to braid your hair?”

“Sure, thanks.” Bellatrix said, going to grab her hairbrush from her trunk.

As Rita plaited her hair Bellatrix realized that for some reason it felt nicer when Rita did her hair than anyone else did. She would probably let Rita braid her hair for hours. Maybe it was because she was gentler than her the house elves, She reasoned.

Bellatrix crawled into her own bed and closed the curtains, while Rita sat on her own bed waiting for sleep to come.

How would she be able to get into Hogsmeade as a second year. Sneaking out would be too difficult, McGonagall had a habit of pacing the grounds as a cat to try and catch young students trying to get out.

Wait. McGonagall. The Animagus. If she was able to transform into an animal, she could get so much information on people. Not just Dumbledore, anyone she wanted to know things about. I mean sure it would be hard, but she was a good witch.

Sleep came easy after that as she told herself she would wake up as soon as the library opened to find some books on the process.

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading <3

Chapter 18 - Your Sweet Smile

Chapter Notes

> Here is the spotify playlist! https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=f214e7312b9e496c

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rita walked into the Library that morning before class and gave Madam Pince a winning grin.

"Good morning!" she said cheerily.

Madam Prince just grunted at Rita, looking her up and down suspiciously.

Rita continued unperturbed "I wanted to impress Professor McGonagall by writing an extra credit report on Animagus and I was wondering if you could recommend a couple of books on the process for me."

Madam Pince raised one eyebrow.

"Oh and I also brought you a treacle tart." Rita said, offering up her last bargaining chip.

"Follow me." Said the woman begrudgingly. "And leave the treacle tart there."

She led Rita through the halls of the library, the books getting dustier as they rounded corner after corner.

"Here is the section on Animagus." Said the librarian. "You may have one hour."

Rita grinned up at the unpleasant woman. "Thank you so much."

Pince nodded and Rita immediately grabbed the first book.

It hadn't been touched in years by the look of it. She opened it and found the chapter on Animagus.

The chapter started with many warnings and a few images of witches and wizards stuck as half animal or exploding. She grimaced but ignored the warnings. After all, if she did everything right like she always did there wouldn't be an issue.

Next was a paragraph reading. "If you intend to become an Animagus it is of the utmost importance that you are of age, have a Ministry approved teacher, and report to the Ministry of Magic for registration. If a witch or wizard is found to be an unregistered Animagus they will be sentenced to serve time in Azkaban. The time period of this sentence will be determined by the Ministry of Magic."

Rita let out a small laugh at that. She had zero intentions of reporting herself to the Ministry. That destroyed half the usefulness of being an Animagus.

She continued to read:

"The process to becoming an Animagus will require the following ingredients:

A Mandrake Leaf held in the casters mouth for the period of one full moon to the next

A hair from the caster's head

A teaspoon of dew that had not seen the sun or been touched by human feet for seven days

And lastly the chrysalis of a Death's head hawk moth."

Rita quickly jotted down the ingredients in the notepad she had brought with her and then began to copy the instructions on the transformation.

"The Mandrake Leaf must be held in the witch or wizard's mouth for a month, starting at one full moon and ending at the next. At the next visible full moon the leaf must be spit into a vial within view of the moon's rays. Then the caster's hair must be added, along with the teaspoon of dew and the Death's head hawk moth chrysalis.

The mixture should be hidden in a dark quiet place until an electrical storm arrives. Until the electrical storm arrives the caster must hold the tip of their wand to their heart every day at sunrise and sunset without fail. As they hold the wand they must chant the incantation ""Amato Amino Animato Animagus""

When the lightning storm appears the caster must move to a large and secure place, recite the incantation for a final time, and drink the potion. If all instructions are followed correctly, the caster will have become an Animagus.

Rita snapped the book shut with delight. She was determined to do this and already knew where to find most of the ingredients. With her hour being almost up and here stomach rumbling and reminding her of breakfast she rushed out of the library thanking Madam Pince on the way out.

She arrived at the Slytherin table in a frenzy, not wanting to miss breakfast, and Bellatrix gave her a quizzical look.

“Where were you?”

Rita shrugged as she stirred some sugar into a cup of tea. “Just at the library researching something.”

“Care to share?”

“No, not particularly.”

Bellatrix stared at her through narrowed eyes. “Alright.”

Rita stared back, eyebrows raised teasingly. “Alright”

****

Here is some fanart I made of Rita and Bellatrix!

No description available.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks as always for reading! Hope you enjoyed<3

Chapter 19 - Standing Alone In A Crowded Room

Chapter Notes

Here's the spotify playlist for this fic <3
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=bc9826aa4b5b468f

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andromeda's first day had been miserable. Her dorm room was the last one assigned and so she only had two roommates instead of the usual three.

Bertha was by far the least pleasant. As soon as she had heard Andromeda's last name, she had withdrawn her stretched out hand and pursed her lips.

"I've heard a lot about your family." she muttered. "Nasty things."

Andromeda had just rolled her eyes and introduced herself to her other roommate.

The girl had bright orange hair that framed her round face.

"Hi I'm Andromeda but you can call me Andy."

"Hi Andy, I'm Patricia. You can call me Pat though."

"Cool, nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you too."

After exchanging polite smiles the two girls had gone to bed.

Andromeda had woken late the next morning, neither of the other girls bothering to wake her. She didn't know how to cast a tempus yet so she had hoped she would hear one of the other girl's wands vibrating to wake her.

She had stumbled around the room quickly trying to get her robes on and then her tie. The tie was tricky and she had to undo it twice. The third try was quite lumpy and didn't quite look right but she didn't really care.

She ran her fingers through her hair as she left the dorm, trying to look at least a bit presentable.

Absent-mindedly she thought about how furious her mother would be with her appearance if she could see her now.

She opted to skip breakfast and instead head straight for potions class. Lucky for her it was in the dungeon so at most she would be a couple minutes late.

She rushed into the classroom, blushing as she realized she was the last student to arrive.

Slughorn frowned. “Miss Black, class starts at 9:00 sharp. If you are late again I am going to remove five points from Slytherin house. I will let it pass today as it is your first day and you are still adjusting.”

Muttering an apology she looked quickly around at the desks trying to find an empty desk. Preferably with a Slytherin and not a Hufflepuff who they shared the double potions with.

The only desk with one person at it was a Hufflepuffs and she frowned as she walked over to it. It was her penance for being late, she supposed.

“Hi” Greeted the boy at the desk.

He had a round face, bright blue eyes, and a flashing grin.

“Hey, I’m Ted Tonks.”

She gave him a polite smile that didn’t last for more than half a second. “Black. Andromeda Black.”

She was surprised that he had no reaction to her last name.

“What not afraid of the Blacks?”

The boy flushed a bit and rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly,. “Erm, I’m actually Muggleborn so I’m not familiar with the names of a lot of the wizarding families.”

Andromeda couldn’t help her face falling at the mention of his blood status. He had seemed nice enough, but mother would absolutely lose it on her if she found out she was friends with Hufflepuff Mud blood.

She kept her eyes focused on Slughorn for the rest of the lesson, doing her best to ignore Tonk's confused glances at her sudden cold attitude.

As the lesson came to an end Slughorn explained that all homework for the first term would be done with a partner. Andromeda groaned inwardly and hoped he wouldn't say that their partner had to be whoever was at their desk.

Slughorn however, could not read Andromeda's inward thoughts and said just that.

Andromeda began to gather her things in a huff.

Tonk's looked up at her. "Guess I'll be seeing quite a bit of you this term then?" he said, offering a small smile.

She snapped her book shut. "Don't get your hopes up." she said stormily as she left the room.

As she left she pushed down the small twinge of guilt at the look of disappointment on the boy's face. It wasn't her fault she wasn't allowed to talk to mudbloods and it wasn't his fault he was born one. However, in the grand scheme of things hurting some kids' feelings was a lot better than angering her mother.

Even if that meant going to sleep her first day at Hogwarts, feeling cold and alone.

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading! Almost at 20 chapters! that is so crazy to me.

Chapter 20 - 'Cause Darling I'm A Nightmare

Chapter Notes

> Here's the playlist I listen to while I write the fic, If you like to listen to music while you read I recommend it: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=bc9826aa4b5b468f

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The days were getting shorter, and the school's workload was getting bigger. Bellatrix had yet to pick an extracurricular and was feeling the pressure to do so. Her mother had sent her a letter that morning demanding an explanation as to why she hadn't picked one yet and had informed her that she was disgracing the house of Black by not putting the effort in to absolutely excel at Hogwarts.

She was walking from transfiguration to the greenhouses for herbology with Rita. They walked down the halls of the school and as they got closer to the courtyard, Bellatrix pulled the hood of her cloak over her head, attempting to shield herself from the autumn chill.

"What's got you so bothered?" Rita asked her, head cocking to the side the way she so often did when her curiosity got the better of her.

"My darling mother." Bellatrix muttered, voice dripping with sarcasm.

Rita gave her a sympathetic smile. "Merlin, I thought my mum was bad until I heard about yours. Now she seems like a saint."

Bellatrix frowned slightly. She never knew what to do when people sympathized about her parents with her. She always had this instinct to immediately tell them to shut up, that they didn't know anything, and they should mind their own business. Rita was okay though. Bellatrix knew she meant the best.

"What does she want from you this time?" Rita asked.

“Same as before. Picking a club.”

Rita nodded. “There’s always knitting club.” she offered, a smirk growing on her face.

Bellatrix put on a fake smile and pitched her voice higher. “Oh perfect! I can sit there and make little sweaters and baby clothes and talk about how I love being a girl and can’t wait to get married and have babies! Amazing idea Rita!”

Rita laughed at that and knocked Bellatrix’s shoulder with her own, causing her to bump into the wall of the courtyard.

Bellatrix scowled at her, and Rita smiled.

The girls fell into a comfortable silence as they walked down the worn-out path through the grass off the grounds and down to the greenhouses. As they got closer more students joined them on the path, headed the other direction.

“Must be the fourth years.” Bellatrix muttered and Rita nodded her agreement.

One boy was a bit taller than the others around him and was walking briskly up the path. As he passed, he knocked Rita’s shoulder.

“Watch where you’re going.” He snapped at her.

Rita opened her mouth to protest, and he continued. “And smile more. I hate seeing girls walking around scowling all the time it’s so unpleasant.”

Bellatrix felt a cold rage flowing through her veins as she stared down at the taller boy.

“That was incredibly foolish.” She whispered.

“What did you say?” The boy said voice even more irate than before.

“I said.” Bellatrix began, enunciating every syllable like she was speaking to her baby cousin, “Facticsuntcorno” she flicked her wand in a motion and both girls watched as the boy’s’ tongue slowly transforming into a large horn growing out of his tongue.

The boy’s eyes bugged out of his head as he attempted to speak around the horn protruding out of his mouth.

Rita let out a small laugh and Bellatrix walked closer, staring the boy down with a cold stare.

“You should learn to be more polite.”

“Yr gonna regret at” The boy mumbled, still struggling to speak, “m a lstange.”

Bellatrix raised her eyebrows in mock fear. “Oh, my Merlin, a Lestrange. Whatever will I do?” Then as she reversed the spell and stared the boy down:

“Probably remind him that I’m a Black and worth twice as much as him.”

The Lestrange boy’s eyes widened. “You’re a Black.”

She nodded, twirling her wand and noticing the boy keeping his fearful eyes on it.

“Yes. And I think if my memory serves me correctly, your’ father works for mine. So, unless you want to lose your families miniscule fortune, that allows your inflated ego to grow, I suggest you don’t tell anyone about this.”

Lestrange nodded his head up and down quickly, and as he quickly made to leave, Rita spoke up.

“I suggest you stop telling girls to smile more or you may find yourself losing more important parts of your body than your tongue.”

The boy nodded and ran up the path as the rest of the second year Slytherins began coming down for Herbology.

Rita turned her head slowly to stare at Bellatrix. “That was brilliant.”

Bellatrix gave a small shrug. “He was being an asshole.”

Rita smiled appreciatively at her. “ I do have an idea to solve your extracurricular dilemma.”

“Oh?” Bellatrix said in response, raising an eyebrow.

“Yeah!” Rita said cheerfully. “Dueling Club.”

Bellatrix nodded in acquiescence. “That’s actually a really good idea. I don’t know why I didn’t think of it.”

“I suppose you’re just lucky you have a friend who is gifted with such brilliance Trix” Rita teased.

Bellatrix nodded as they walked into the greenhouse. “Yes, and such humility.’

Laughing Rita shot back “You know you love me.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks as always for reading! The spell bellatrix uses does exist but it doesn't have an incantation so I just wrote my own using latin words. the HP Wiki just says its a tongue horn hex. Also 20 chapters!!!!!! 10% of the story is done! Thanks to everyone who has been reading and tolerating the fact that I'm just giving Bellatrix my mommy issues.

Chapter 21 - Magic, Madness

Chapter Notes

Hey lovelies! Here's the spotify playlist for this fic:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=8c18d5eb9c344ce7

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Hey, since we’re still figuring out how to expose Dumbledore, maybe we should start working on another standard issue of the Rumour Mill?”

Rita suggested one night from the comfort of her bed which she and Bellatrix were both studying on. Though Bellatrix was the only one who was learning anything. Rita just liked to take out her books so she could pretend she had studied.

“Yeah sure.” Bellatrix agreed, placing a folded parchment in her potion’s textbook as a makeshift bookmark.

“Any ideas?” The dark-haired girl questioned.

Rita looked over the table of the library and into Bellatrix’s steel grey eyes. “I think the male population of Hogwarts needs to be taken down a few notches.”

Bellatrix nodded her head in agreement. “Well obviously, but maybe something more specific?”

“Let me think.” The blonde girl sat there for a few minutes racking her brain for the stories she remembered from the submissions they often received.

“Got it.”

Bellatrix raised her eyebrows expectantly. “What is it?”

“Okay so I remember there was a submission for the Rumor Mill where someone had said that Bertha Jorkins had found her boyfriend kissing that Florence girl from Hufflepuff in an empty classroom, and she hexed him.”

“Good for her.” Bellatrix said, nodding in appreciation.

“Agreed. But then Dumbledore punished her for being aggressive and violent towards other students.” Finished Rita, rolling her eyes during the end of her sentence.

“So unfair.” Muttered Bellatrix.

“I know! So I think that should be the main page. Then why don’t we spread the word in the next couple days and make a list of cheaters. Girls just have to submit who they’ve snogged recently and we can put together whether or not the guys are cheaters.”

Bellatrix nodded a wicked gleam in her eye. “Then maybe for the last page on a completely unrelated note, we could provide instructions on how to perform a bat-bogey hex.”

Rita pretended to swoon in her seat at Bellatrix’s idea. “You’re brilliant Trix.”

“Don’t call me that.” Responded Bellatrix, though it was mostly out of habit at this point.

They stayed in the library a little while longer, Bellatrix working on the instructions for the hex and Rita scribbling away on the main story. Once they had both finished a rough draft they packed up their things and walked out of the library, thanking Madam Pince.

They had found a simple, good morning, thank you, and general appreciation for literature helped them stay on the woman’s good side.

When they got to the hall it was full. The girls sat down next to Carrow and Zabini, and Bellatrix returned the small wave her sister gave from where she was sitting with the first years. Bellatrix couldn’t help but notice she was alone.

Rita was chattering away to Zabini, no doubt about the plan. Rita turned to Alecto.

“Your brother is in Ravenclaw right?”

Carrow nodded suspiciously and said hesitantly “Yeah, why?”

Unperturbed by the other girl’s suspicion Rita kept going. “Do you think you could ask him to spread the word that girls who have been wronged, or suspect being wronged can submit their complaints about the male population to our little mailbox?”

Alecto was about to say no, Bellatrix could see it in her eyes. So she kicked the Carrow girl’s ankle from under the table and stared her down until the stocky girl relented.

“Yes, I’ll let him know after dinner.”

“Thanks!” Rita said in surprise. She had thought she would have to be more convincing than that.

“Alright now that that’s settled,” Bellatrix said while sipping some tea “Let’s settle on a release date for this one, and our method of transportation.”

Zabini tapped Bellatrix’s shoulder and Bellatrix couldn’t help but jerk away.

“Sorry,” Zabini muttered “Forgot you don’t like that.”

“S’fine.” Bellatrix said avoiding the other girl’s gaze. “What were you going to say?’

“I had an idea for distribution is all.” Rita and Bellatrix looked at her expectantly but, suddenly aware of the fact that they were sitting at a table surrounded by all teachers and students at Hogwarts, she quickly said. “Why don’t we discuss in the dorms,” With a pointed look at the amount of people in the great hall.

The three girls got up from the table and made their way to the dungeons. As they walked past the end of the Slytherin table Lestrange stuck his boot out in an attempt to trip one or all of them.

Bellatrix pulled Rita back just in time to stop her from falling.

Bellatrix whipped her head around to glare at the boy, her thick hair bouncing as she turned.

“Keep it up Lestrange. See what happens.”

He shrugged and looked up at her with sheepish eyes. “Sorry, my foot slipped.”

She ignored him as they walked away, knowing better than to hex a student while teachers were watching. However, when they weren’t it was a fair game. Lestrange better watch his back.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks as always for reading! I started this fic 11 days ago which means I averaged 1464 words a day. I think that's pretty good! <3

Chapter 22 - I Just Like Hanging Out With You

Chapter Notes

> Hey lovely people! Here's the spotify playlist:
> https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=f214e7312b9e496c

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andromeda was begrudgingly walking towards one of the dungeon classrooms often used for practicing potions.

The dripping of the wet stone and chill the dungeons always seemed to retain made her foul mood even worse. She walked through the open doors thinking about how much she'd prefer to spend one of the last nice days of the year out in the courtyard. To further her annoyance she realized her partner hadn't arrived yet.

She rolled her eyes and irritably opened her potions book to the forgetfulness potion they were supposed to provide a vial of for the next potion lesson. Just as she finished reading over the instructions once, the Hufflepuff boy came bustling in.

"Sorry I'm late. My friend lost her frog." He blurted it out, red in the face.

"Sounds like your friends' problem." She said coldly, not bothering to keep eye contact for more than a second.

In her peripheral vision she saw Tonks open his mouth in surprise and then close it with a scowl. Great thought Andromeda. If she was gonna be in a bad mood for this, he could be too.

"Why don't you start reading the potion recipe and I'll prep ingredients."

“Okay.” The boy mumbled, grabbing his own potion book out of the satchel he had set on the table. Andromeda noticed that it was not bought first hand as hers had been.

Andromeda gave the cauldron a quick scourgify, and then whispered an incendio to the burner.

“Here’s the Lethe River water.” Tonks said, handing her the eyedropper.

Andromeda nodded her thanks and carefully put two drops into the cauldron.

“Could you pass me the valerian sprigs as well.” She mumbled holding her hand out and keeping an eye on the potion.

Tonks placed it in her hand, and she dropped it in stirring three times clockwise.

Glancing at Ted she nodded, and he waved his wand over the potion.

“Right well that’s going to need to sit for forty-five minutes, so I can stay here and keep an eye on it if you like.” she said stonily.

Tonks just shrugged and went to his bag. “I actually brought some other work I had to get done while I wait for the potion to brew. I don’t fancy walking all the way back to my common room.”

Raising her eyebrows in surprise, Andromeda nodded. “I actually had the same idea, so I suppose I’ll stay here as well.”

They set up their quills and inkpots on opposite sides of the table and quietly got to work.

Andromeda was supposed to be doing her transfiguration essay for McGonagall, but it turned out to be a lot more difficult than she had anticipated. She was supposed to be providing a detailed description at least a paragraph long of each letter of the transfiguration alphabet, but could not for the life of her get past the letter s.

Letting out a frustrated huff, she was just getting ready to give up when Tonks looked over at her.

“What are you working on?” he asked politely.

“Transfiguration Alphabet. I really suck at it though.”

“What letter has you stuck?”

“S”

“Let me help.”

Andromeda opened her mouth to protest but closed it again quickly. Sure, she wasn’t really supposed to talk to mudbloods but she also wasn’t supposed to get bad grades which was what was going to happen to her if she didn’t finish this homework.

“Okay.” She mumbled awkwardly.

Tonks, as it turns out, was very good at transfiguration and helped her through the whole alphabet. He didn’t just give her the answer either. It was like he slowly steered her in the right direction so she could figure it out herself.

She took a quick glance at the clock as she rolled up her parchment.

“It’s almost been forty-five minutes. Do you want to start preparing the rest of the ingredients?”

Ted nodded and reached for the mistletoe berries Andromeda had laid out earlier.

Andromeda added the standard ingredient into her mortar and then wordlessly took the berries from Ted, grinding the two items together with the mortar and pestle.

She then took two pinches and placed it into the bubbling potion.

“How do I stir it?” Tonks asked, spoon hovering over the cauldron.

“Five times anti clockwise.”

Ted nodded and stirred the potion correctly.

“Want to do the honors?” he offered, stepping away from the potion.

Andromeda and, holding her wand above the bubbling potion whispered “Obliviate” as she made the motion of a brain above the cauldron.

“Brilliant!” Said Tonks, grinning up at her as he took a vial from his potions kit.

He siphoned some of the potion in with his wand and then put some more into a vial for Andromeda. Once they both had a vial in their hand Andromeda vanished the potion.

The boy began packing his things up and, as he left, shot a blinding grin at Andromeda. “You did great. I think I’ll enjoy having you as a potions partner.”

Andromeda gave him a small smile, just one corner of her mouth lifting. “Thanks for the help with transfiguration.”

He nodded as he began to walk through the doors. “No problem, see you on Monday for potions.”

Andromeda began to clean up her own items, worry growing inside her at the thought that she had actually enjoyed spending an hour and a half with a mudblood. Mother would be furious.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading! and also tedromeda is so special to me. I can't wait to see more of them. Lmk what you think of the fic so far. Constructive criticism is always welcome. Luv you all <3

Chapter 23 - Poke That Bear Till The Claws Come Out

Chapter Notes

Here's the spotify playlist for this fic:https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=733b9321d9034417

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bellatrix, Rita and Zabini giggled as they walked back into the common room managing to find small area that wasn't taken up by older students.

They sat down and pulled out their potions essay, having figured out earlier that year that if they all worked on the same essay at the same time it would make it easier to do the work correctly. As they began to work Carrow came and sat down next to them.

She placed some small pieces of parchment in between the part of the floor the other three girls were sitting on.

"That's the last of them from the other three houses. Did you get the rest from Slytherin?"

Bellatrix nodded at the brunette as Rita snatched up the parchments.

Rita held up the parchments and quirked her eyebrow at Bellatrix and Bellatrix nodded.

Standing up and stretching Rita said "Trix and I will go set these up and I guess we'll see how it goes tomorrow."

The girls went to the common room but were interrupted by Andromeda.

"Hey Bella!" She said eyes hopeful. "Are you busy or do you think you'd have time to help me out with something?"

Bellatrix's eyes darted back and forth between Rita, who was waiting by the portrait hole, and her sister who looked desperate to be with her.

“Sorry Andy.” She said regretfully “I have something I have to do tonight.”

Andromeda’s face fell, though she quickly placed a fake smile on.

“It’s all good.”

“Maybe tomorrow?” Bellatrix offered.

“Yeah. Maybe.” Said Andromeda, quickly turning away to go to her dormitory.

Bellatrix turned to go out the common room with Rita who gave her a sympathetic smile.

“She’s little and she looks up to you.”

Bellatrix nodded. “I know. I just want a chance to break away from my family a bit. And she deserved to do that to.”

Rita nodded as they snuck into the first-year potions classroom.

“I totally get it Trix.”

“Don’t call me that. And shut up. We’re gonna get caught.”

Andromeda woke up that morning to the vibration of her wand on the bedside table, having learned quickly that her roommates would not wake her up.

She ran her fingers through her shoulder length brown hair and pulled it back into a quick ponytail. It was messy but she didn’t really care.

Before she left class, she took one quick look at her appearance, it was positively disheveled. From the messy hair, to the wrinkled shirt, to the lumpy tie, she had managed to look like the least presentable student at all of Hogwarts.

She gathered the book and potions kit that she stored under her bed and dropped them into her cauldron which she carried out of the room. As she left the common room, she saw Bella

and her friends giggling about something in the corner.

She felt anger and jealousy twist violently in her stomach. How could Bella ignore her like that. Was that all she was going to get in all her years with her sister at Hogwarts. A couple of polite smiles and vague promises to hang out.

Sighing and pushing her traitorous feelings deep down she began to walk to class.

She arrived at the class on time for once and slipped into her desk by Tonks.

“Hi!” he said, grinning sunnily.

“Hi.” She said back, not bothering to smile.

They both turned their heads up as Slughorn walked over to the board and waved his wand at the chalk as it began to write.

“Good morning students. Today we are going to be submitting the forgetfulness potion, and learning about the technical components of a calming draught.”

The chalk teachers used at Hogwarts were enchanted to write out whatever they said and save them from having to write things on the board. However, this piece of chalk seemed to have a mind of its own and had been written on the board.

“Stuart Craig should learn not to stand a girl up and then snog another girl an hour later. If he doesn’t learn that someone may have to teach him by scratching up his broomstick.”

Stuart Craig, a rather ugly boy with a nasal voice stood up abruptly. “Sir, pleas may I go check and see if my broomstick is alright?”

Slughorn just sighed and nodded at Craig. “Go Craig, and be back soon.”

The boy ran out of the room and Slughorn vanished the writing, trying again.

This time it began writing.

“Speaking of brooms, the broom closet by the stairs to Gryffindor seems to be occupied quite frequently by Bones and his girlfriend. So imagine her surprise when she opened it last Monday to see him in there with Gideon Prewett.”

The class burst into laughter and gasps of shock.

Slughorn who looked positively red in the face by now, spluttered “Now children. Who is responsible for this?”

Nobody answered, though the sound of chalk writing on the board could be heard.

Turning around, Slughorn read out under his breath. “This edition of potions class has been brought to you by the Rumour Mill. Maybe next time a boy uses you, find yourself replacing his hair washing potion with one for boils.”

Slughorn vanished the board and hurriedly turned to the students. “Do not give other students boils potions and please ignore the rumor mill.” Desperation for control of the class was clear in his voice but it was far too late for him.

The rest of the class he could barely be heard over the buzz of chatter and when they left the classroom students around the hall were already whispering about the new edition of the Rumour Mill.

As much as the students were delighted, the teachers were not. Many stormed around, furious at the interruption of their lesson and the encouragement from the rumor mill to harm other students with the spells they taught.

As Andromeda sat at the Slytherin table eating supper, she noticed her sister and her friends seemed very pleased by the recent edition and absentmindedly wondered if they had anything to do with it.

Chapter End Notes

happy valentines day lovelies, hope you enjoyed this chapter <3

Chapter 24 -

Chapter Notes

Hey lovelies, here's the spotify playlist:
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=f214e7312b9e496c

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rita waited for the sound of the other girls breathing to go shallow and slow, then got up and quietly slipped on her shoes. She began to slowly turn the handle to the old door of their door when she heard stirring from Trix's bed. She froze. Bellatrix did not.

Bellatrix opened up the curtains of her bed and stared at Rita, an aristocratic eyebrow arched.

"What are you up to?" She inquired; voice laced with suspicion.

Rita wasn't sure how she was going to explain this. "I'm going out."

Bellatrix nodded understandingly "At 11 pm."

Rita blushed at the obviousness of her feeble excuse. Gladly it was dark so Bellatrix couldn't see her reddening cheeks. "Feeling a bit peckish. Thought I'd go to the kitchen for a snack."

Bellatrix nodded suspiciously. "Right. Well, I guess I'll come with you."

Rita's eyes widened. "You don't have to."

Bellatrix was already up and twisting her thick hair into a bun. "Really Rita, it's the least you could do after waking me up."

Rita nodded nervously, and both girls snuck out of the common room.

As they walked toward the kitchen, not speaking a word, Rita decided she would just act out her plan the next evening.

Bellatrix stopped suddenly, a few steps ahead of Rita and turned around to look the blonde girl in the eye.

“We aren’t going to the kitchens, are we?”

Rita gave her a small smile “I wasn’t heading there, no.”

Bellatrix gave her a small smile. “Holding out on me huh?”

“Maybe.” Rita grinned.

“C’mon, tell me where you’re going.”

Rita rolled her eyes and turned around. “Follow me. We’re going to Filch’s office.”

Delighted at convincing Rita Bellatrix followed. “Why?”

“He has something I need.”

“What? Merlin trying to get answers out of you tonight is like pulling teeth.”

Rita laughed quietly at that. “I need a Death’s Head Hawk’s Moth chrysalis.” She said, trying to sound casual. “I heard Filch confiscated one.”

Bellatrix arched her eyebrow again. “That’s a very specific ingredient. What are you using it for?”

Rita shrugged trying to appear nonchalant. “Just a little project.”

“Right.” Bellatrix muttered, unconvinced “Would this project also require dew and a mandrake leaf?”

Rita grimaced. She had been found out and this would be it. Bellatrix obviously wouldn't let her go through with it and she would never find something on Dumbledore.

Bellatrix just laughed. "Thought so." To Rita's surprise, the other girl kept walking.

"Wait your fine with it?"

Bellatrix gave her a fixed look. "Rita. I'm from the Black family, it's basically a requirement that every family member do something illegal. You are not the first attempted Animagus I've met." Then a teasing smile on her face. "I just hope you don't get stuck as a snake forever like my uncle Arcturus."

Rita's eyebrows shot up. "He got stuck?"

Bellatrix nodded. "Though he wasn't particularly clever from what I've heard. You are, so I'm sure you'll be fine."

The girls quieted as they approached Filch's office. They had to be careful as Filch often spent the nights roaming the area near his office.

"Keep lookout?" Rita asked. Bellatrix gave her an encouraging nod.

Rita pushed the old door open and saw the dusty desk filch used. She tiptoed over and opened one of the drawers. Many confiscated prank toys but no chrysalis. She opened the next drawer which seemed to be various items students had used to cheat, spell check quills and the like. The last drawer was the jackpot confiscated items. As she rummaged around, she felt something cold and web like. Holding it up to the dim light of the office she could tell it was the chrysalis. It looked just like it had in the book.

As she made to leave, she could hear muttered words on the other side of the door.

"Yes sir." She could hear Bellatrix saying in that fake sweet voice she only used for teachers. "I just heard some of the older students saying they were planning to dress your cat up in baby clothes and thought you'd like to know before they did it."

Filch grunted out some words that Rita couldn't catch and then she heard his angry footsteps stomping away. Once the sound of his feet on the stone floors had faded away, she pulled the door open and held the chrysalis up.

“Got it!” She grinned. “Nice save by the way.”

Bellatrix gave her a rare smile back. “Let’s head back before he spots both of us.”

The hallways were relatively empty save for Filch who they had from behind a tapestry once on the way back, and of course the portraits who all glared at them suspiciously. Rita swore she heard one of them mumble about how children these days had no respect for the rules of the school.

They arrived at the common room and quickly snuck through, not wanting to wake any of the fifth years who had fallen asleep studying for their OWL’s mock exams.

They pushed open the door to the dorm and in the dim light by Rita’s bed Bellatrix smiled at her.

“I rather like you so please don’t go blowing yourself up or turning into a squirrel forever or something.” Bellatrix blurted out in a hushed whisper so as not to wake the other girls. Rita almost wanted to laugh at how Bellatrix looked sick to her stomach from the mention of affection.

“I’m rather fond of you too Trix. You’re my best friend.”

Bellatrix didn’t smile, but she didn’t look disappointed at the admission.

“Yes, well, Goodnight Rita. "she said awkwardly, climbing into her own bed and closing the curtains.

“Night Trix.” Rita whispered as she hid the chrysalis in the drawer of her nightstand.

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading <3

Chapter 25 - They Are The Hunters We Are The Foxes

Chapter Notes

> Here's the spotify playlist : https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=3cd4ec94fcac46c4

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Though finding the Chrysalis had been a success, the onslaught of winter chills and snow had thrown a wrench into the girls Animagus plans. Clear skies at night were far and few between and there hadn't been one on the full moon in November.

The girls had decided not to be disheartened and instead turned their interest to dueling club.

Rita ran down the hallway trying to get to dueling club, well not on time, but maybe not insanely late.

She ran in to see all the students practicing wand movements already and winced.

"Ms. Skeeter." She heard the deep voice of the headmaster and turned around trying to rearrange her facial features into something more pleasant.

"Yes sir?"

Dumbledore eyed her in a way that made her feel like he was staring into her mind and reading everything she had ever thought. She repressed a shiver.

"Do you make a habit of being late when professor McGonagall is leading this club."

Rita shook her head fervently. "No Professor. It was a onetime mistake."

Dumbledore nodded though he continued to stare at her thoughtfully. “I see.”

“Ms. Black.” He called out to where Bellatrix was standing partnerless against the wall. “Now that Ms. Skeeter is here will you join us in our exercises?”

Bellatrix pushed herself off of the wall and walked over to Rita.

Rita raised an eyebrow at her. “Causing trouble till I got here?”

Bellatrix shrugged, glaring at her. “Just didn’t want to partner up with anyone else.”

Rita grinned at her “Love ya too Trix.”

Pulling her wand out of her robe pocket, Bellatrix snapped “Don’t call me that.”

Rita rolled her eyes and pulled her own wand out. “Show me the wand movement?”

Bellatrix moved her wand first swirling it and then flicking it away.

Rita mimicked her motions. “Like that?”

Bellatrix nodded. “Dumbledore says we have to practice the movement at least ten times before we actually start using it.”

Rita nodded and both girls silently did their ten repetitions. When they were done Bellatrix explained the pronunciation to Rita.

“ExPELLiarmus.”

“Expelliarmus.”

“No listen. ExPELLiarmus.”

It took Rita a couple of tries to get it and once she did, she waved at Dumbledore.

“Sir, we’ve practiced the movement and pronunciation. Can we put it to use now?”

His eyes twinkled in a way that made Rita distinctly uncomfortable.

“Quick test for house points first ladies.” He said staring at Bellatrix more than Rita.

“If say a student was coming back from class and had the horn tongue hex cast on him, what spell should he use to protect himself from violent students.”

Rita’s eyes widened as she glanced over at Bellatrix who gave her a small shake of her head. Bellatrix held her chin up and stared Dumbledore down almost defiantly enough to get in trouble.

“If the student was clever enough to think of a disarming spell such as expelliarmus I would recommend it.” Her silver eyes flashed in the low light of the classroom. “However, seeing as the student is in a situation where someone feels the need to hex him, perhaps he is not intelligent enough to execute it.”

Lestrange, who had been struggling with the wand movement in the corner of the classroom, dropped his wand and glared at Bellatrix.

“Is there any reason for the specific nature of the question Professor?” she asked, chin tilted, and eyebrows raised.

“No, no reason Miss. Black. Though perhaps I am cautious because so many students have recently been encouraged to cause harm to other students.”

Bellatrix gave the headmaster a slow and small smile. “I wouldn’t know anything about that professor.”

His eyes twinkled, as if he had caught her. “I didn’t say you did Miss. Black.”

At this point the whole club was watching the charged exchange. A small girl with curly hair bigger than her face staring up at one of the most formidable wizards in the world. Surprise showed on everyone’s faces when Dumbledore walked away. The small girl had won.

Bellatrix walked over to Rita, looking quite pleased with herself.

“I definitely though you were getting a detention for that.” Rita laughed.

Bellatrix gave her a pointed look. “The point of that little altercation wasn’t to get me in trouble. It was to let me know he’s keeping an eye on me.” She gave Rita a rare grin. “I take that as a challenge.”

Rita smiled as they began to practice the disarming spell.

Half an hour later the girls left the dusty classroom, heading to the great hall for supper.

To their surprise, Dumbledore began to walk alongside them. It was quite a comical picture really, two twelve-year-old girls, walking through the large halls of the castle arm in arm, and an old wizened professor walking alongside them looking as merry as the girls did uncomfortable.

Rita was just about to open her mouth to speak when Dumbledore said. “I believe Christmas is coming up.”

Bellatrix nodded. “Yes, I believe so sir.”

Dumbledore stared at Bellatrix as he continued. “Staying here this holiday?”

Shaking her head and giving the headmaster a small smile she responded, “I’m afraid not, too many family gatherings to attend.”

Dumbledore nodded. “I see. And yourself Miss Skeeter?”

Rita awkwardly muttered “No I’m going to go home. My mum misses me.”

Dumbledore smiled brightly at that. “Well, I hear mothers tend to do that. You know I do find it interesting girls that last year we had quite a stir before the Christmas holidays.”

Bellatrix glared at Rita who was turning red with nervousness. “I wasn’t sure if it was a stir sir. You see, it being our first year, we weren’t really sure if it was normal or not. And nobody would tell us because well, we weren’t allowed to talk about it.”

As they walked into the great hall Dumbledore's eyes narrowed and he tapped his nose while saying "A good point Miss. Black. Though I am telling you now, it is not normal and if such disturbances continue, the headmaster may have to step in and investigate."

Bellatrix smiled widely back as she responded. "The principal may want to start his examination in the Black wing of the library. Over twenty five percent of Hogwarts's catalog I hear."

Dumbledore gave Bellatrix a small smile as he walked towards the teachers table.

Rita stared at Bellatrix, slack jawed.

"How do you do that?" she asked in amazement.

Bellatrix shrugged. "When in doubt just remind them how rich you are."

Chapter End Notes

20K words!!!!!!! In 16 days!!!!!! So crazy. Thanks to everyone who's read along so far. Love u all <3

Chapter 26 - They See Right Through Me

Chapter Notes

> here's the spotify playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=3cd4ec94fcac46c4

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andromeda cursed Slughorn as she trudged up the stairs of the dungeon to the main floor of the castle. He had to go and force her to be partners with a Hufflepuff and now she had met him up at a stupid abandoned classroom to do their work instead of just working in her own comfortable common room.

She walked into the classroom and saw that Tonks was already there. This wasn't much of a surprise because Andromeda knew she was late.

"Hey Black." Tonks said, looking up briefly from his work.

"Bring the book on Dragon's Blood?" He asked.

Andromeda held it up. "Yeah, let's get started.

They worked in silence for a while. While Andromeda wasn't pleased to be stuck around a mudblood for all her potions work this year, she had developed a quiet communication with Tonks that worked quite well.

The sun began to set and the classroom became too dark to work in. Andromeda frowned and began to pack up her things. They had only gotten to the tenth use for dragon's blood and this essay was due tomorrow.

"What are you doing?" Tonks said curiously, "We aren't done yet."

Andromeda gave him a quizzical look. "It's too dark."

Tonks shrugged. "Just use Lumos."

Andromeda felt a flush rise to her cheeks. “Erm. I’m not very good at it so, I just work in natural light.”

Tonks smiled brightly. “That’s fine; I can cast it.”

Andromeda gave him a small smile and he continued. “I can help you practice the spell next time we work together if you want.”

Andromeda spent a moment weighing the consequences of what would happen if her mother found out she was learning magic from mudblood. But really her mother didn’t have to find out, Andromeda reasoned.

“Okay, thank you.” Andromeda mumbled awkwardly.

Tonks just gave her another bright smile.

Half an hour later they finished their work and Tonks cast a copying spell on the parchment handing Andromeda a copy.

“Thank you.” She said, giving him another small smile as they walked out of the room.

Tonks put his hands into the pockets of his robed awkwardly. “Guess I’ll see you next Friday then?”

“Yeah, guess so.”

He gave her a small wave as he walked towards what she assumed was the Hufflepuff common room. “Right, well have a good night, Andromeda.”

She froze at the use of her first name and gave him a small wave as he left. She hadn’t even realized he remembered her first name. She certainly didn’t remember his.

She walked down the halls absentmindedly trying to recall Tonk’s first name when she felt someone bump into her shoulder. She was about to send them a famous Black family glare when she realized it was Bellatrix.

“Hey Bella.”

“Hey Andy.” Bellatrix responded; mood unusually good.

“What are you up to.” Bellatrix shrugged, eyes glittering and decidedly un-innocent. “Nothing much. I mean just a little something to keep the end of winter term interesting but besides that nothing much.”

Andromeda scowled at her “Be careful or you’re gonna get in trouble like last Christmas.”

Bellatrix’s face fell at the mention of last year. “Don’t talk about that.” She said, voice gone sour.

“What were you up too?”

Andromeda made a grimace as she responded. “Potions. With a Hufflepuff.”

Bellatrix pretended to gag. “Ew. Who?”

Both girls sat on one of the smaller couches closest to the main common room fireplace. “Dunno if you know him. Tonks?”

Bellatrix wrinkled her nose. “I don’t know him no. Which means he’s a mudblood.”

Andromeda nodded “Yeah, I think he is. He helps me out a lot though.”

Bellatrix raised her eyebrows at Andromeda. “Be careful yourself Andy. That’s not something mother would love to hear.”

Andromeda raised her eyebrows back at her sister. “Maybe there’s lots of thing mother wouldn’t like to know about happening at school.”

Bellatrix threw her head back and let out a cackling laugh, “Andy! I have no idea what you’re talking about!”

Andromeda pretended to shove her sister. “Yeah, and I’m not doing potions essays with a mudblood.”

The girls sat in comfortable silence for a while, green light of the lake washing over their facing and creating a peaceful environment. After about twenty minutes Andromeda stood up.

"I'm gonna go to bed Bella."

Bellatrix pouted from her seat on the couch. "No stay."

"I'm tired Bella."

Bellatrix nodded understandingly but Andromeda continued.

"You know you could spend time with me though, right? Because I don't really have friends and I miss you."

Bellatrix's eyebrows furrowed and she opened her mouth in surprise. "I'm so sorry Andy. I didn't realize you were feeling alone."

Andromeda shrugged awkwardly at the emotional exchange. "Okay, night."

"Night." Bellatrix mumbled from the couch.

Andromeda walked into her dormitory where her roommates were already in their beds. She crawled into her own bed and sighed at the sound of their chatter.

Bellatrix walked to her own dormitory a few minutes later and pulled open Rita's curtains.

"My sister is all lonely."

Rita arched her eyebrows. "I see."

Bellatrix looked at her imploringly. "What do I do?"

Rita laughed, her blue eyes crinkling. "Merlin Trix, it's like you've never experienced human emotion before."

"Shut up." Bellatrix mumbled as she sat on Rita's bed.

Rita patted the pillow and Bellatrix lay down, closing her eyes as Rita ran her fingers through Bella's hair soothingly.

Chapter End Notes

thank as always for reading <3

Chapter 27 - Now I'm Wide Awake

Chapter Notes

> heres the spotify playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=35ebceed082646b3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rita opened the door to their dormitory in surprise. If prefects needed to talk to them, they didn't normally bang on the door so loudly.

"Merlin, what do you need… Oh hi. Andromeda, right?"

The small girl stood in front of the door, brown hair framing her face messily and her chin jutting out in defiance.

"I need to speak with my sister."

Rita raised her eyebrow in amusement. "I'm afraid your sister is still sleeping."

Andromeda pushed passed Rita, much to Rita's surprise.

"I'll wake her up then."

The green curtains to Bellatrix's bed were pulled open by the younger Black and Bellatrix was shaken awake by her sister.

"What is wrong with you?!" Bellatrix yelled.

Andromeda Raised her voice as she responded "I found out what your little plan is for last day of term. Do you have any idea how furious mother and father will be if they found out."

Bellatrix rolled her eyes. "Relax Andromeda, I already know how I'm gonna explain it to them."

Andromeda threw her hands up in exasperation. “I don’t understand you. You complain about how I don’t lay low, and how we just need to do what they say and everything will be fine and then you do this?”

Bellatrix stared her sister down from where she was sitting on her bed, still looking half asleep. “Andy there is no proof that I’ve done anything. And besides I’m gonna tell mother and father that the magazine will be good for the family, and our reputation.”

“I don’t understand you, Bella.” Andromeda said, running her hands through her hair. “You say we’ll stay together forever and then I come to Hogwarts and you say two words to me a day. You tell me to behave and then run a gossip magazine. You were never like this before Hogwarts! It’s her isn’t it.”

Andromeda’s voice had risen again as she pointed at Rita. Zabini and Carrow were watching with interest from their beds, but Andromeda didn’t care.

Bellatrix looked at her, same passive expression she had held throughout Andromeda’s whole outburst. “Get out of my room now Andy. I’ll see you on the train tomorrow.”

Andromeda felt her heart sink. That was it. Her sister was too busy with her new friends and new projects to even realize the danger she was putting them both in. Lip quivering she nodded firmly to her sister and pushed her way out of the room, trying not to cry at the sound of giggling coming from the room as she left.

She wandered the halls until she spotted the tapestry, she knew had a small alcove behind it. She sat on the damp floor of the dark corner and hugged her knees to her chest, sobbing softly.

She wasn’t supposed to cry because it was a show of weakness but she had never been able to stop her emotions from pouring out. She had learned quickly as a child to find quiet places to cry unfound and then return politely later on. She had kept the practice going as she came to Hogwarts this year, not wanting to bother her dormmates with her tears.

As she wiped her eyes, she heard a rustling close to the tapestry and held her breath.

“Is someone in there?” She heard a boy’s voice call out.

She stayed perfectly, still hoping she could stay unnoticed, but luck was not on her side today. A small hand pulled the tapestry open and Tonk's eyebrows shot up in surprise.

"Andromeda! I'm sorry I didn't realize."

"It's fine." she said, cutting him off coldly and abruptly.

As she began to walk away, he grabbed her hand "Are you sure?"

She stared down at where he had grabbed her, surprised. Nobody touched her. "Yeah, I'll be fine." she whispered, snatching her hand away.

"Bye Tonks."

The girls all giggled as Andromeda walked out. Rita quirked her eyes questioningly at Bellatrix and she shrugged in response, letting the other girl know it would be fine.

"Well, now that I'm awake did you guys want to do some work on our little project?"

The girls nodded enthusiastically and pulled out large sheets of fabric from under their beds.

They spent the morning casting spells over the pieces of fabric slowly transforming them. Zabini had done the drawings for this edition, Bellatrix had done the research, Rita had done the writing, and Carrow had figured out how to get them to unfurl from the great hall tomorrow morning. Apart from Andromeda's little interruption everything was going according to plan.

Chapter End Notes

sorry this one was shorter but thanks for reading. Updates are probably going to be a bit slower because I have an exam coming up :)

Chapter 28 - Secrets Splashed On The News Front Page

Chapter Notes

here's the spotify playlist <3
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=f214e7312b9e496c

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The great hall was abuzz in the morning. Even the students who looked exhausted from exams still chattered away and there seemed to be an energy buzzing through the air around the students. Even the teachers had noticed and looked apprehensive, knowing that this time last year an edition of the rumour mill had come out.

Dumbledore himself appeared a bit wary and Bellatrix did not miss the way he stared her down. She met his eyes with an arched brow as he stood at the head of the teachers table and began to speak.

“Students your attention please. I would like to draw your attention to last year when you no doubt recall a student magazine coming out.”

Murmurs could be heard throughout the four tables at the open admission to the rumour mill. Most of the teachers had refused to talk about it until now.

“I would like to give the perpetrator one more chance to come forward about this act.”

Nobody moved, though many students’ eyes widened eagerly at the idea of figuring out who was spreading the gossip.

Dumbledore let out a soft chuckle. “I didn’t think that would work. However, I would like to let the perpetrator know that if the editions stop now there will be no punishment and no attempt to find the culprit. However,” He continued, “If the editions continue all teachers will be putting in extra time and observation to finding out the culprit of these actions.”

Bellatrix held her breath as Dumbledore sat, then turned and grinned at Rita.

“Reckon the perpetrators should stop the editions?”

Rita pretended to think “Hmmm, what do you think Zabini?”

“Not sure,” Zabini mused. “Maybe, and this is just an idea so hear me out.”

The other girls nodded, grinning.

Zabini continued “Maybe the perpetrators should drop an edition right now.”

With that each of the girls looked up to the ceiling and saw the banners previously holding house banners and Hogwarts crest transform into large caricatures of Dumbledore.

Waves of laughter came from the students as they saw the drawings of Dumbledore and the teachers’ faces transformed in horror.

The largest banner was above the head teacher’s table, it normally had the Hogwarts crest on it. Currently it sported Zabini’s cleverly drawn Dumbledore. To the students’ enjoyment and the teacher’s frustration the tapestry Dumbledore began to speak.

“Welcome to this edition of the rumour mill!” It announced gleefully. “It’s brought to you by Albus Percival Wulfric My Mother Must Have Hated Me to Give Me This Long a Name Dumbledore.”

Another wave of laughter then it continued.

“I thought I might like to walk you through a history of Dumbledore’s last four years as headmaster of Hogwarts. In 1959 Gryffindor won the house cup! Then in 1960 Gryffindor won the house cup! Then in 1961 Gryffindor won the house cup! Then last year take a guess as to who won the house cup?”

The students from all tables except Gryffindor shouted out “GRYFFINDOR.”

The caricature of Dumbledore nodded from above the teachers table where some had pulled out their wands and were getting ready to vanish the tapestry.

The tapestry took a quick look at the teachers and immediately began speaking much faster. “Now I’m not here to accuse anybody, I just want to say that it’s interesting that a headmaster who is supposed to be impartial and unbiased is happy showing blatant favoritism to the house that was once his.”

Shouts of agreement came, mainly from the Slytherin table at that. Bellatrix noticed that even Andromeda had shouted at the injustice.

As a jet of light shot out at one of the teacher’s wands the portrait shouted out. “Be wary of Albus Dumbledore. If he’s willing to stand for altering a small thing like the house cup, imagine what other things he’s willing to rationalize.”

Dumbledore’s eyes twitched as the banner disappeared and all the others transformed to show dates of Dumbledore’s favoritism. The banner above the Slytherin table read out “For the greater good, but at what cost?” Bellatrix had chosen that one, not knowing the full history around the phrase but knowing it was from Dumbledore’s past.

A round of applause came from all tables except Gryffindor who didn’t like to acknowledge the favoritism they so clearly received.

Dumbledore stood again, eyes back to their usual twinkling. He raised his arms up and spoke.

“I’m glad the perpetrator has made their decision known to us so quickly. I am quite fond of efficiency and they will be found and punished soon.”

The laughter and cheers died down quickly at that announcement and Bellatrix met Dumbledore’s firm gaze locked onto hers as he sat down.

Later that evening the girls found themselves on the train back home. Bellatrix had encouraged Andromeda into their compartment.

“C’mon Andy. Don’t be mad about the Rumour Mill.”

Andromeda rolled her eyes at Bellatrix and glanced into the compartment quickly. “Bella your friends are waiting for you.”

Bellatrix raised her eyebrows and held out her hand. “I’m not going in without you.”

Andromeda finally relented, taking her sister’s hand and rolling her eyes. “Fine but you better have a good explanation about this for mother and father.”

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading! luv u lots <3 if you like fanart i have a instagram where i post every now and again @nowyouhangfrommylips

Chapter 29 - Crumpled Up Piece Of Paper Lying Here

Chapter Summary

TW: DESCRIPTIONS OF MAGICAL VIOLENCE/TORTURE. PLEASE DON'T READ IF THIS WILL TRIGGER YOU.

Chapter Notes

TW: DESCRIPTIONS OF MAGICAL VIOLENCE/TORTURE. PLEASE DON'T READ IF THIS WILL TRIGGER YOU.

Please take care of yourselves lovelies. Here is the spotify playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=f865eea55cc24f7f

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bellatrix and Andromeda stood in front of the desk in their father's study. Andromeda shifted uncomfortably on her toes while Bellatrix stood tall, staring her father down.

"Explain." He said harshly.

Bellatrix rushed to speak before Andromeda could. "Father Andromeda has nothing to do with it, please let her go."

Her father turned his eyes to her sister. "Is this true?"

Andromeda's eyes shifted almost imperceptibly to her sister and Bellatrix gave her a small nod.

"No father, I don't know anything about it." The younger girl said.

Their father looked Andromeda over once and then gave her a firm nod. "Go greet your mother then."

Andromeda turned and fled the room quickly. Bellatrix felt a wave of cold fear run over her as the door closed behind her sister. The sound echoed through the room like a death sentence. Bellatrix stared at her father apprehensively.

"Do you care to explain why the student gossip magazine has continued for a year after I explicitly instructed you to make sure it did not continue."

"Yes." Her father's eyebrows were raised, obviously not expecting that answer.

"Well, explain then."

"I knew we could use it to our advantage."

"What do you mean."

"Think about the last edition. It got almost all the students outside of Gryffindor to hate Dumbledore. If I figure out who runs it, I can use it to our advantage instead of shutting it down."

Her father looked her up and down. Bellatrix steadied her breathing, feeling like a criminal staring up at the judge about to give them their sentence. Her father opened his mouth.

"You mean to tell me that you are unaware of who runs the magazine at this time?"

Relief washed over her and she smiled, "No I don't know father."

He gave her a small cold smile. A smile that meant all was not forgiven and he did not believe her. Fear washed over her as he whispered: "Liar."

As he hissed out the word she was filled with a searing pain and fell to the floor. It was as if every inch of her body was on fire, the pain licked at her skin, through her muscles, and all the way down to her bones. She felt as if the pain was melting her away, her body had melted into the flames and all that was left was her soul writhing on the ancient carpet. A dull ache filled her brain and the noises around her were fuzzy, she was unable to think clearly or hear anything though she thought she might be screaming.

After what could have been minutes or years, she wasn't sure, the pain stopped.

"You would do well not to lie to me child." He said, looming over her trembling body, tucking his wand into the pack pocket of his robes.

“Yes father.” Bellatrix mumbled, as she tried to pull herself up from the floor. Her voice was raspy so she must have been screaming.

“Sit.” Cygnus commanded, gesturing to a chair by his desk. She sat.

“Again. I will ask, do you know who is running the magazine.”

“Yes.” She managed to croak out.

“Who?” He whispered.

“Skeeter.” She mumbled, continuing quickly to redeem her friend “But father, I can control it. I can make sure the family is protected. I promise you I can do this.”

The cold man eyed her suspiciously. “I suppose nothing bad has come of it yet. I want you to befriend this Skeeter girl and I want you to oversee the situation. Do you understand me?”

Bellatrix gave him a nod.

“If anything happens to our family because of this magazine, it falls on your head. Do I make myself clear?”

Bellatrix nodded again.

“You are excused.” Her father mumbled eyes now on the pile of papers at his desk.

As she left, Bellatrix stared down at the floor where just moments ago she had been writhing in agony. How strange it was that everyone knew and yet they all just moved on like nothing happened. Her father would always just put his wand back in his pocket and her mother would turn her eyes away from the bruises. She tried to shake the thoughts from her head as she went to her room.

As she opened the door to her bedroom, she saw a blonde ponytail turn the corner. She hid a small smile.

“Cissa, I know you’re there.”

Her little sister came out of her hiding spot grinning.

“Hi Bella!”

“Hey Cissa. Miss me?”

Narcissa nodded, her grin sporting a few holes where teeth had gone missing since Bellatrix saw her last.

“Are you okay? I heard you yelling in father’s study.”

Bellatrix’s face fell for a moment before she remembered to rearrange her facial expression. “Don’t talk about that okay Cissa. I’ll be fine.”

Narcissa nodded, flinging her arms around her sister’s neck. “I love you.”

Bellatrix detached herself from her sister’s arms and walked back to her bedroom door. “Goodnight Narcissa.

Chapter End Notes

> okay so first off fuck cygnus black. But I think this chapter is really important because a big part of Bella's character is that she feels like she has no other option but her family and what is presented in front of her, so I think it's really important to show the way she rationalizes how her family treats her. Also that little narcissa moment is really important for their sibling relationship. She can't say I love you to Narcissa, but she can try and protect her and Andy from their fathers anger. Thanks as always for reading<3

Chapter 30 -

Chapter Notes

gasp! she updated! yes she did. sorry it's been so long i've had one of the worst weeks. My dog died and i spent the week studying for an exam that my college wouldn't let me take. So needless to say lots of tears and not much writing. Updates should be more frequent now though. Here's the spotify playlist https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=bc9826aa4b5b468f

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Black manor's ballroom was full of pure bloods all circling around in festive greens and reds, laughing with fake high-pitched voices. Bellatrix stood on the sidelines with her sisters and cousins.

Regulus was talking to their cousin Evan and Sirius kept attempting to run off. All in all it had been a horrible evening so far. Bellatrix had never really enjoyed these kinds of pureblood events and her stiff dress made the evening even more unpleasant.

Across the room she heard a gleeful laugh that sounded oddly familiar. Bellatrix could have sworn it sounded like Rita but that wasn't possible. The Blacks were very particular about who attended their events and the Skeeters had never been invited before.

However, it would seem that her parents had changed their very strict guidelines this year because sure enough, Bellatrix could now see Rita from across the room.

She gave a small wave of her gloved hand to the other girl. Rita grinned and walked towards her, a long green evening gown trailing slightly behind her.

As she came closer, she greeted her "Hi Trix."

Bellatrix suppressed a smile. "What are you doing here?"

Rita shrugged, "Last minute invitation from your father. Might have something to do with my father's promotion at the ministry."

Bellatrix hummed in agreement. So, this was a test from her father. Keep Rita in line for the evening to prove she could keep the magazine in check.

“Do you know the dances?” She demanded of Rita.

Rita shook her head apologetically, blonde hair bouncing. “No, sorry.”

Bellatrix frowned. “Alright, if anyone asks you to dance, let them know that you have a delicate constitution.”

Rita smirked. “A delicate constitution? What is this the 20’s?”

Bellatrix frowned. “This isn’t a joke Rita, this is a test.”

Rita’s face fell. “I see.”

Seeing the concern in her friend’s face Bellatrix gave her a small pat on the back. “It’s fine, you’ll do well, I’m sure.”

Both girls walked over to the other children and Andromeda gave Rita a thin smile.

“I see our parents have lowered the standard for this evening’s event.”

Rita gave her an equally small smile. “Andromeda, so nice to see you. I didn’t realize your parents don’t normally allow you to attend.”

Bellatrix bit the inside of her cheek to stop herself from laughing at Rita’s retort and the scowl on her sister’s face.

“Cissa” Bellatrix called out, and her youngest sister skipped over.

“Yeah Bella?”

“I want you to meet my friend Rita from school.”

Narcissa waved shyly to Rita who crouched down a bit to speak to the smaller girl.

“Hi Narcissa, I’m Rita. I share a room with Trix here at Hogwarts.”

Narcissa gave Rita a small smile. “She lets you call her Trix?”

Rita laughed. “Well she doesn’t like it but there’s not much she can do about it now is there?”

At that moment Sirius rushed over, “There’s grownups yelling over there!”

Now, was Bellatrix supposed to be the one keeping an eye on the other children to ensure they behaved? Yes. Was she also still a child herself and very curious? Also yes.

So naturally she followed the rest of the people who were flocking towards the sounds of yelling from the other side of the large room.

Slightly out of breath Bellatrix exchanged a worried look with Andromeda when she saw it was their father, Aunt Walburga, and Uncle Alphard exchanging heated words.

“You have disgraced this family for the last time Alphard!” Walburga shrieked.

Alphard laughed. “This family! To disgrace this family is an honor. It is full of pride, and evil people bent on undermining and destroying each other! I would be glad to have no part in it.”

“Then leave.” Her father’s voice boomed out. “You are no longer welcome her Alphard, and you are a Black only by name.”

Alphard appeared startled, but only for a moment before he gave an exaggerated bow and said, “It would be my pleasure.” Before storming out of the ballroom.

Noticing the group of people surrounding the now fizzled out argument Cygnus lifted his champagne glass and said, “Please go back to enjoying your festivities. We were just having a small discussion that got a bit out of hand.”

People began to mingle at that announcement and Bellatrix felt a small hand slipping into her hand.

“Are we going to see Uncle Alphard again?” Narcissa whispered clutching Bellatrix’s hand tighter. Bellatrix shook her hand away.

“No Cissa, I don’t think so.”

Narcissa walked away and Rita nudged Bellatrix’s shoulder with her own. “I take it this was an atypical family event?”

Bellatrix nodded. “Yes, a bit more eventful than usual.”

Rita laughed. “I for one enjoyed it.”

Bellatrix gave her a small smile. “Of course you did, you need gossip like a fish needs water.”

Rita smiled at that. “You know me too well. I should probably leave though. I don’t want to overstay my welcome.”

Bellatrix nodded. “That’s probably for the best. I’ll see you when term starts.”

Bellatrix watched as Rita turned and walked to the fireplace at the other end of the ballroom and disappeared into green flames.

Rita arrived home to an empty house, her parents were no doubt still enjoying mingling with high society. She rushed to her bedroom and fished for the notebook she kept under her mattress. Grabbing the quill from her bedside she furiously scribbled out “Alphard Black disowned by the Black family. Perhaps they are not as pure and perfect as everyone thinks. Investigate more.”

Bellatrix was important to her Rita reasoned, but a good story couldn’t be given up. Especially not one about one of the most highly regarded families in pure-blood society. This story could kickstart her career. Maybe Bellatrix would understand.

Chapter End Notes

thank you all for reading! can't believe we're at 30 chapters!

Chapter 31 - I Learn Your Secrets

Chapter Notes

> two chapters in one day! shocking i know. But what can I say, i missed you guys <3
> Here's the playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=3cd4ec94fcac46c4

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bellatrix was a little apprehensive as she walked into the castle after winter break. Tensions at home had been running high ever since the Christmas ball and she had been doing her best to keep herself and her sisters out of the line of fire.

Not to mention now that she was back at school the teachers would be trying to figure out who was running the rumor mill, and she didn't feel like being caught.

Andromeda walked beside her through the courtyard, pale skin turning rosy in the cold.

"Please tell me you're not going to continue that stupid magazine now."

"Please tell me you're not learning potions from a mudblood." Bellatrix shot back.

Andromeda rolled her eyes. "I must work with Tonks. He was my assigned partner. Nobody is forcing you to run this magazine! It's already gotten you hurt, why are you continuing?"

Surprised at her sister's little outburst but resolute to not show it on her face, Bellatrix shrugged, "I'm having fun. Ever heard of it Andy? Or do you spend all you time crying in alcoves?"

Andromeda stopped abruptly in her tracks at the cruel barb from her sister.

"What is wrong with you?" The younger girl shot back, tears welling in her eyes.

Bellatrix shrugged again. "I'm just trying to help you learn how to have fun."

Andromeda shrugged, “Being crucio-ed is fun for you?”

Bellatrix eyes flashed with rage immediately as she grabbed her sister’s arm, cold fingers twisting around her sister’s cloak.

“Keep your voice down you idiot. You know other people can’t know about that.” She hissed out.

Both sisters stood in the middle of the courtyard, Bellatrix’s hand still clutching Andromeda’s arm. The flickers of anger in both of their steely grey eyes were almost enough to melt the snow, which was now falling and landing in their curls.

“Hi girls!” An airy voice called out.

Bellatrix immediately let go and Andromeda shook her arm away, both of them plastering almost identical fake smiles onto their faces.

“Hi Rita.” Bellatrix responded.

“Are you busy?” The blonde girl inquired, coming up behind Bellatrix and resting her chin on the dark-haired girl’s shoulder.

“No.” Bellatrix said, cold eyes still fixed on Andromeda. “I was just leaving.”

“Alright.” Rita said, voice gleeful as usual. “Come down to the dorm with me then, I have something exiting to tell you!”

Rita pulled Bellatrix through the halls, both of their boots thudding loudly against the stone. The drips of water from the dungeons could be heard and soon enough they were at the portrait hole.

“Memento Mori” Rita called out, breathless.

The portrait swung open to a bustling common room full of students studying, chattering, and to Bellatrix’s disgust snogging.

“Can’t they do that in private?” she muttered, glancing at one particularly enthusiastic couple.

Rita laughed “Lighten up Trix, their just saying hello after winter hols.”

“Yeah, well it’s disgusting.” She snapped.

Rita rolled her eyes at the other girl and started walking down the stairs of the dungeon to the girl’s dormitory.

Once they were back in their dorm and the door was shut firmly Bellatrix spoke again.

“What did you have to tell me that was so important you had to drag me through the entire castle?”

Rita in response opened her mouth wide.

Bellatrix blinked at her. “Okay….”

Rita rolled her eyes. “No, look.” She opened her mouth again, and Bellatrix took a closer look.

Pressed to the side of Rita’s cheek was a small green leaf.

“You did it!” Bellatrix said in surprise.

Rita nodded eagerly. “There was a clear night with a full moon before the end of hols so I went for it.”

Bellatrix grinned at the other girl, then her eyebrows furrowed. “How are you going to hold that in your mouth for a month?”

Rita lay down on her bed as she explained. “Semi-permanent sticking charm.”

“Brilliant.” Bellatrix admired, as she lay down next to the other girl.

“Only...”

“What?” Rita said, face worried as she turned it towards the other girl.”

“It’s just that McGonagall has become an Animagus, so if she sees that she’s definitely gonna know what you’re up to. Let me do a concealment charm on it.”

Rita patted her shoulder affectionately. “Good thinking Trix, what would I do without you?”

Bellatrix shrugged; eyes closed as she said. “Don’t try anything stupid and you won’t have to find out.”

Rita gave a pained smile to the other girl as she drifted off, her mind still weighing the pros and cons of a story that could kickstart her career and her friendship.

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading. I'm also on tiktok, twitter, and instagram if you want to see a variety of quillkiller content

Chapter 32 - In The Heat Of The Fight

Chapter Notes

> Here's the spotify playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=sg5AziY1RhylUZuljuxm4Q

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They had had a couple close calls in the first week before the full moon, Rita wasn't losing the mandrake leaf, but it made her speak oddly.
McGonagall had asked Rita what was wrong with her mouth during transfiguration but Rita had quickly said that she bit her tongue that morning.
Now that the full moon was here Bellatrix and Rita eagerly snuck up to the astronomy tower, where they would easily be in view of the moon's rays.

"Do you have everything?" Bellatrix whispered.
Rita nodded, blue eyes flickering in the moonlight streaming onto her rosy face.

She pulled a small vial from her robe pocket and held her wand inside her mouth whispering "Finite." And spitting the mandrake leaf into the vial.

"Dew please." she said, looking at Bellatrix expectantly.
Bellatrix fumbled around in her own robe pockets until she felt the small vial she had collected that morning from the forbidden forest. She uncorked it and poured the dew into the vial Rita was holding into the moonlight.

"Okay now the chrysalis." Rita muttered more to herself than Bellatrix.
She dropped the hardened grey chrysalis into the vial. She put the stopper in the vial and immediately put it in her pocket.

She stared up at Bellatrix with wide blue eyes. "I can not believe I just did that."

Bellatrix grinned at her "Having second thoughts?"

Rita rolled her eyes. "No way. Now come on, I want to find a damp place in the dungeons right away."

The girls padded down the steps of the tower, and found the staircase that was the quickest way to the dungeons. They stayed as quiet as possible, feet barely making a sound on the ancient cobblestone floors.
Once they arrived in the dungeons they turned the opposite way of the common room.
Bellatrix gave Rita a quizzical look.

“I want to put it somewhere other students are less likely to find it.” Whispered Rita in explanation.
Bellatrix nodded in agreement, curls bouncing around her face as she did.

They turned a corner and Rita eyed a tapestry quizzically.
“What about behind there?” She mused.
Bellatrix pulled the tapestry back and ran her fingers along the stone alcove behind it.
“Yes, I think it’s damp enough.”

“Alright.” Rita whispered. Gently placing the vial in the corner of the alcove. It made a small clink as it touched the stone and both girls froze.
“Let’s go back to the common room before we get caught out of bed.” Rita said quickly.

Bellatrix nodded.

Once they had managed to sneak through the common room and into the dorms Bellatrix grabbed Rita.
“How are you going to know when it’s sunrise to say the incantation? We can’t see it down here.”

Rita grimaced. “Lots of early morning Trix. Lots of early mornings.”

True to her word Rita woke up early the next morning and tiptoed out of the dorm, careful not to wake any of the other girls. She took her quill and parchment with her and climbed the largest staircase out of the dungeons.
Once she arrived on the main floor she found a small window seat where she would be able to see the sun rise. She pulled out her quill and absentmindedly chewed on it as she decided the direction she would go with her essay.

Soon enough the Lumos-ed tip of her wand began to be outshone by the sun, rising through the window panes. Rita took a quick glance around for people (mostly teachers as it was only really seventh years who were up this early) and placed her wand to her heart.

“Amato Amino Animato Animagus” She muttered, rolling her parchment up and heading back down to the dorms to get ready for charms. She yawned widely as she walked down the deserted hallways. Merlin hoped an electrical storm would arrive soon.

Rita walked through the hallway of the girls’ dorms, almost at her own when a girl rushed out of a room and ran straight into her.
Rita jumped in surprise as the other girl mumbled out an apology.

Once the girl lifted her head Rita raised her eyebrows in surprise.
“Andromeda? Where are you off to in such a rush.”
Andromeda’s apologetic face quickly turned sour. “None of your concern. Why are you out so early?”
“None of your concern.” Rita shot back.
Both girls stood facing each other in the hall, tension thick enough to cut with a knife.
“Look.” Rita started. “What’s your problem with me?”

Andromeda scoffed. “I thought that would be obvious.”
Rita resisted the urge to roll her eyes. Talking to this girl was like pulling teeth. “Well it’s not so if you could explain that would be great.”
“Fine.” Andromeda said, harshly. “I think you’re a terrible influence on Bella.”
Rita raised an eyebrow. “No really what’s your problem.”
“I just told you!” Andromeda exclaimed, throwing her hands up in the air in exasperation.

“Seriously? You think I’m a bad influence on your sister? If anything your sister has been a bad influence on me! Don’t tell me you idolize her so much you don’t even know who she is.”
Andromeda’s lip quivered.
“You think you know Bella better than me? You don’t. She’ll get tired of you eventually and come back to me. She knows family is more important and however close you think you are; you aren’t. Don’t go thinking you’re someone you aren’t Skeeter. Don’t go around thinking you’re more important than you are.”

Andromeda pushed past Rita who just laughed in surprise. Who knew the little Black was such a firecracker.

Pushing the door open to her own dorm, Rita smiled as she saw Bellatrix getting ready in the vanity.

“Hey Trix.”
“Hey.” The other girl mumbled, eyes not leaving the tie.
“You’ll never guess who I ran into.”
Bellatrix looked up in the mirror, meeting Rita’s piercing gaze through the reflection.
“Who?”
“Your little sister.” Rita mumbled, pushing Bellatrix’s hand away and fixing the tie herself.
“Said you’re gonna get tired of me soon and come back to your family where you belong.”

Bellatrix rolled her eyes. “She’s just jealous I know how to make friends and she doesn’t. Besides, you aren’t getting rid of me that easy.”
Rita hummed, now detangling Bellatrix’s hair with her fingers. “I didn’t think so. Still, maybe you should spend some more time with her.”
“Maybe.” Bellatrix agreed, though she mostly sounded like she was saying it just to appease Rita.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks as always for reading <3

Chapter 33 - It's Nice To Have A Friend

Chapter Notes

> Heres the spotify playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=625f28f39e0b41df

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andromeda had pushed past Rita and stormed out of the common room. Fury ran through her veins at the thought of the that girl's glittering eyes and condescending smile. Who did she think she was, corrupting Bella like that? Did she even know the damage she was causing?

Making sure no prefects were looking, she climbed out of the portrait hole and into the cool air of the dungeons.

The Slytherin common room often felt like a cage to her. It reminded her of home and the fact that this was the life she would be destined for. The cool green light that seemed to follow you everywhere and the stern faces of everyone around her made her feel queasy and lost.

Hogwarts itself, however, felt free. Once she got up to the main floor, she turned off the main hall and onto one of the side corridors.

Hogwarts was full of mystery and possibility, so she had recently taken to spending her evening exploring in hopes of getting to know the ancient building better.

She turned a corner and realized she must be by the kitchens, judging by the smell. Just as she turned the corner, she saw a group of Hufflepuff students walking forward. She turned around to retreat but froze as one of them called out.

"Who's there?" one of the two girls called out.

Andromeda turned to face them again. “Andromeda Black, sorry to disturb. I’ll be leaving now.”

“I’ve heard about you.” The other girl said her voice was soft as she observed Andromeda with soft brown eyes.

“Yes I know. My family and all their transgressions.”

The taller girl spoke up again. “No! Well, I mean yes we have heard of your family. But you’re our friend Ted’s potions partner. He said you’re really good to work with.”

Andromeda’s eyebrows shot up at that. “Tonks said that?”

The brown eyed girl nodded. “It’s nice to finally meet you.” She held out her hand. “Hestia Jones, nice to meet you.”

Andromeda nodded. “Likewise. And you are?”

“Emmeline Vance.” The taller girl responded. “What are you doing out so late?”

Andromeda rubbed the back of her neck awkwardly. “I find the Slytherin common room kind of claustrophobic, and my dormmates aren’t big fans of mine. So I sometimes walk around up here to clear my mind. I’m sorry again.”

Jones shrugged. “That’s fine. It must be lonely not having your dormmates like you.”

Andromeda nodded stiffly. “Erm, yeah I suppose it is.”

“It’s past curfew now but in the future, find us and we would love to chat.” Emmeline said as the two girls walked towards their common room.

Andromeda stood still for a few moments even after the girls left. They wanted to hang out with her. Why? This must be some kind of trap set by Tonks. What did he want from her.

The next day Andromeda threw her books into her cauldron hastily after class and swung it onto her arm as she began to walk to the old potions classroom. She slammed the cauldron onto the old table and relished in the look of surprise on Tonks' face.

"Why are you sending your friends after me huh?" Andromeda questioned furiously.

Confusion was written out all over Tonks' face as he spluttered.

"Yeah, I'm not stupid despite what you might think. I saw them last night and they were trying to convince me to chat with them sometime. Said you talked about me. What exactly are you trying to get them to figure out about me?"

Tonks sat in bewilderment at her outburst for a moment before beginning to speak.
"Andromeda, I told my friends about you because, no offense but you seem kind of lonely and they wanted to hang out with you."

Andromeda felt a sinking feeling in her stomach.

"Are you seriously that insecure? That you can't believe people might just want to be your friend?"

Face burning, Andromeda now found she could not look Tonks in the eyes. "I'm really sorry. I'll go."

Tonks rolled his eyes and sighed. "No you won't."

She stopped abruptly.
"You made one mistake. That doesn't end a friendship."

"We're friends?" Andromeda said, looking at the boy with hopeful eyes.

Tonks shrugged. "If you want to be."

"Okay." Andromeda said. Smiling as she pulled her books out of the empty cauldron.

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading <3

Chapter 34 - Sick and Tired

“Merlin, I think I’m gonna be sick.” Bellatrix muttered, running into the bathroom of the dorm.

The sounds of her retching put looks of disgust on the other three girls’ faces.

Rita was lying in bed, her normally pale skin flushed red. Her forehead had sweat beading on it, and she mumbled out in a hoarse voice “Someone get Pomfrey.”

Zabini who was sitting on the edge of her bed looking half dead mumbled. “Send Carrow”

Alecto rolled out of bed and sprinted to the bathroom and sounds of retching filled the room again.
“Not Carrow.” Rita mumbled.
Zabini rolled her eyes. “We’re all sick. We have to go to the hospital wing together.”
Rita went to nod but instead sneezed loudly, her nose smarting afterwards. Zabini was staring at her in horror.
“Oh Circe.”
“What?” Rita exclaimed, dread setting in.

“Sparks came out of your nose.”

The dread settled in the pit of her stomach like a very heavy millstone. “Shit. We need to go to the hospital wing now.”

Zabini nodded and rushed over to the bathroom. “
Girls! We all have to go to the hospital wing now. Bring something to be sick in so you don’t get anything on the floors.”

There was no response from behind the door, so Zabini pushed it open to find the two girls groaning by the toilet, skin slowly turning a puce green.

Rita hearing Zabini gag rushed into the bathroom. “Merlin’s balls we’re gonna have to carry them, aren’t we?”

Zabini nodded, lips pursed.

“Right, well I’ll take Trix, and you take Alecto.”
Both girls moved as fast as their own sick bodies would let them.
“C’mon Trix.” Rita grumbled as she tried to pull a lethargic Bellatrix from the ground.

They stumbled out of the dorms and up the stairs into the common room. A prefect saw them struggling and ran towards them.
“Stop!” Rita shouted. “Don’t come any closer. It’s Dragon Pox.”

At the mention of the disease everyone in the common room took about five steps away.
“Go tell Madame Pomfrey that we are infected and having trouble getting to her. Zabini and Carrow are still in our dorm. I will take Bellatrix to the hospital wing.”

The prefect nodded and hastened out of the room.

“Run!” Rita shouted after them.
Rita managed to drag Bellatrix to the main staircase of the dungeons.
“Okay Trix, we have the stairs left.” Rita mumbled. She had glanced down at her own hand which was steadily turning green. Bellatrix was in worse shape though, purple blisters already beginning to form.
“We can do it.”
Bellatrix shook her head in protest, but Rita grabbed her firmly. “You have too. You’re very sick Trix.”

However sick she was she apparently still had the presence of mind to mumble “Don’t call me that.”

Rita rolled her eyes. “That’s enough from you miss. Up the stairs.”
“I’ll try.” Bellatrix groaned.

It took them ten minutes to get up the stairs.

“C’mon Trix,” Rita mumbled, “It’s just around the corner.”

Rita had glanced at her own arm briefly and seen the purple blisters forming on it. She had barely any energy left to move her own body, let alone pull Bellatrix’s along.

“ ‘m just gonna sit down for a minute.” Rita mumbled, collapsing on the stone floor.

“Me too.” Bellatrix whispered, nearly toppling onto Rita’s lap.

Rita closed her eyes just for a moment.

When she woke up she groaned and rolled over on the soft white linen. It took her a moment to register her surroundings. The hospital wing. She sat up wincing at the headache she had.

Madame Pomfrey came bustling in. “Sorry dear, side effect of the potion.” Rita nodded.
“Who brought Bellatrix and I the rest of the way?”
Pomfrey smiled kindly. “I did. It was very good of you to send that prefect ahead and let him know. If you had stayed sleeping there without me knowing Merlin knows what could have happened.”

Rita rubbed her eyes and scanned the hospital wing. Every bed was full.
“Everyone got it?” She mumbled.
Pomfrey nodded. “Unfortunately yes. Most students in first and second year got it. There was an outbreak a couple years ago so the older students are immune but you little ones were unlucky.”

“Is Bellatrix, okay?” Rita queried, eyes still searching the room. “Yes, she’s at her sisters bed over there.” Pomfrey said, pointing to the other corner of the room.

Rita nodded, getting up to go see the other two girls. “Oh madame Pomfrey?” She called out quickly. “Are my dormmates alright?”

Pomfrey nodded kindly, “they are fine, though they will be asleep for a little while longer still.”

“Thank you.” Rita said, offering a blinding smile to the older woman as she walked over to Bellatrix.

She patted the Raven-haired girl’s head to get her attention.
“Hey Trix, feeling better?”
“Yeah much.” Bellatrix said, giving a smile of relief. “Thanks for going all mother hen on me. Don’t know what I’d do without you.”

Rita grinned and rested her head on Bellatrix’s shoulder. “You gonna stay here with your sister?”

Bellatrix shook her head. “No. Pomfrey said she’d be asleep for a couple more hours and I’m still exhausting.”

Rita nodded and patted Bellatrix’s frizzed black hair. “Let’s go rest in the dorm then.”

As they walked out of the hospital wing Rita linked their elbows together, pleased when Bellatrix didn’t tense at the physical touch.

“you know,” Bellatrix said, refusing to look at Rita as they walked down the hall together. “I would have been pretty sad if you died of dragon pox.”
Rita turned her head to grin at Bellatrix whose high cheekbones were now dusted with pink.

“How kind of you to say.” Rita teased. “I love you too.”

Both girls laughed as they headed back down to the Slytherin dorms.

Chapter 35 - You've had it figured out since you were in school

Chapter Notes

> hello lovely people, sorry it's been awhile since the last update. Luckilly I passed my exam (3rd times the charm) and my next course doesn't start for two weeks so I'll have lots of time for writing. Here's the spotify playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=625f28f39e0b41df

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Can anyone tell me what the definition of a vampire is?” Professor Merrythought asked the class.

The sun was streaming through the windows and onto the ancient wooded desks. It illuminated the bored faces of several of the students. With exams so close, hardly any students were interested in being presented with more information they needed to retain.

Merrythought sighed from where she stood in the dimmer light at the end of the classroom.

“Anyone at all?”

Bellatrix begrudgingly raised her hand.

“Yes Miss Black.” Merrythought said, looking relieved to finally have at least one participant.

“A vampire is an evil creature that roams the night feeding on the blood of living beings. It cannot go out in the daylight.” She repeated, word for word from the textbook.

“Very good, any idea of what the physical indicators of a vampire are?”

Bellatrix nudged who had been staring out the window next to her.

“Your turn.” She muttered.

Rita started. “Sorry professor, what was the question?”

Merrythought gave an exasperated sigh. “The physical indicators of a vampire please Ms. Skeeter.”

Rita nodded quickly. “Right of course. Sorry. Erm... pale, fangs, and black eyes.”

Merrythought nodded. “Yes, thank you ladies. Ten points each to Slytherin. Vampires are incredibly dangerous dark creatures who are part of the living dead classification. It is important to be of the utmost caution if ever you visit some of their native lands. These are Romania Transylvania, and some forests in Britain and the United States.”

A girl with mousy brown hair raised her hand from the back of the class. “Is it true that some places sell blood tasting sweets for vampires.”

Merrythought nodded. “Yes, often shops that are in support of the integration of werewolves into the wizarding world.”

Bellatrix scoffed at that.

“Is there something you would like to add to the conversation Miss Black?”

“Sorry professor. I don’t mean to be rude, it’s just that I think it’s pretty harmful to risk the lives of real wizards and witches in order to allow half breeds to have a wand. It’s dangerous and it’s part of the reason the wizarding population, especially in Britain is dwindling.”

Merrythought pursed her lips. “I see. There are two schools of thought on the acceptance of as Ms. Black so delicately put it “Half Breeds.” into the wizarding world. Each student is entitled to their own opinion though I suggest you discuss it with your peers.”

Chatter began to break out in the classroom.

“Not right now.” Merrythought said, clearly exasperated at the lack of control she had over the class. “Your assignment for this week is fifteen inches on whether or not you think werewolves should be integrated into the wizarding world.”

At the mention of assignments, the students all quickly began to gather their things and leave class which Merrythought weakly protested at.

As Bellatrix and Rita wandered slowly out of the room Bellatrix heard her call out meekly. “Class dismissed.”

Rita and Bellatrix walked slowly to their next class. Normally they moved fairly quickly together, but the charms class for third years had gotten out at the same time and the small hallway was rather crowded.

“You know if you had stayed quiet we wouldn’t have another assignment right?” Rita said, eyes flashing with almost playful annoyance at Bellatrix.

“I know but mother will be pleased to hear I’m supporting the families views very vocally”

Rita rolled her eyes, pointed nose now in the air as they kept walking.

“Is there a problem?” Bellatrix asked, voice bristling.

“No. It’s just, do you only ever do what will make your mother happy?” Rita asked.

“Of course, I do, don’t you?” Bellatrix responded, baffled by the question.

At this point both girls had come to a full stop in the hallway, the throngs of other students passing by around them.

“Is that even a question Trix? Of course, she does. I’m not an extension of her I’m my own person.”

Bellatrix’s eyes flashed. “My mother doesn’t view me as an extension of myself! You don’t know anything about my family why are you assuming you do?”

Rita raised her hands in defense. “Listen Trix, I’m sorry. I don’t want you to feel like I’m attacking you because I’m not. I’m just saying you don’t have to do what your mother wants all of the time.”

Bellatrix shoulders relaxed as the tension left her body. “I know, I’m sorry for yelling. It’s just that it’s easier in my family to do what your supposed to do and do it well.”

Rita nodded sympathetically. “I couldn’t do that.”

Bellatrix laughed and they began to walk to class again. “I know. Lucky for us you weren’t born into the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black.”

Rita grinned. “Yes, lucky us.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading <3

Chapter 36 - In a sunlit room

Chapter Notes

> thanks as always for reading <3 also this is officially the longest thing i've ever written which is so crazy. Hope you are all still enjoying <3

“ I have an idea” Rita mumbled

Both girls were lying on Bellatrix’s four poster bed, the door to the dorm room open allowing the sunlight from the lake to stream down and onto their faces.

Bellatrix’s eyes were illuminated by the greens and yellows beaming on her face as she opened her eyes lazily.

“What is it.” She mumbled, tucking her head further into the crook of Rita’s shoulder.

“Well, you know all the suits of armour?”

Bellatrix hummed in acknowledgement.

“I think we could enchant them to move and yell out gossip.”

Bellatrix looked up and met Rita’s eyes.

“During exam season? You’re evil”

Rita shrugged. “I know. But what do you think about the idea.”

“S’good. Let’s work on it when I finish my nap. That transfiguration exam exhausted me.”

“Alright.” Rita mumbled, absentmindedly patting Bellatrix’s hair.

Bellatrix almost immediately dozed off; arms wrapped around Rita's torso effectively trapping her in the bed as well. Eventually the soft lighting and rise and fall of Bellatrix's breathing outweighed the excitement of a new edition of the rumor mill and Rita dozed off as well.

Both girls woke with a start to the flash of a camera and giggling.

Zabini and Carrow were standing over the bed holding a camera in their hands. Zabini grabbed the photo as it came out of the camera and began waving it back and forth.

"What the hell is that?" Rita mumbled, rubbing the sleep from her eyes.

"It's a muggle camera that I enchanted to make magical pictures. But look, you guys were so fast asleep it barely moves at all."

Bellatrix sat up scowling. "Give that to me." She snapped, snatching the photo out of the other girl's hands.

"You shouldn't do that without people's permission."

"Sorry." Carrow mumbled, her hands up in the air in defense.

"Trix it's fine." Rita mumbled, grabbing the other girl's hand and pulling her back to the bed. Let's just work on the new edition."

"Fine." Bellatrix mumbled begrudgingly, still shooting daggers at Zabini as the other girl walked across the room to her own bed.

Rita snapped in her face to bring her attention back. "Pay attention to me not them. They didn't know you didn't like pictures."

"What kind of spell did you have in mind." Bellatrix muttered. Rita knew this was as close to pleasant as she would be getting for now and decided to work with it.

“I think it will have to be a mix of the patronus charm, the sonourus charm, and a locomotive spell.”

Bellatrix’s eyes widened. “A patronus charm?”

Rita nodded.

“Rita that’s insanely complex magic.”

Rita shrugged. “I know, but I figure if I’m already trying to become an Animagus I could also figure out how to produce a Patronus.”

“How is that going by the way?” Bellatrix asked, tilting her head.

Rita scrunched up her nose in displeasure. “Had to start the incantations all over again because I didn’t do it while were sick.”

Bellatrix patted her shoulder sympathetically. “It’ll happen”

Rita gave her a thin smile. “I know. For now let's work on writing out the gossip we will want the knights to yell out.”

“How about,” They heard Zabini call out from her bed. “You let students pay to have the armor deliver messages to other students. Dramatic things like how dare you cheat on me and I’m breaking up with you.”

“Brilliant.” Rita grinned. Bellatrix recognized that grin. She was in planning mode.

“I will spend some time trying to learn the patronus charm, but as a back up Trix why don’t you see if you can get them to speak using a transfer of the sonophorous charm.”

“Sounds good.” Bellatrix agreed and got up to find a suit of armour to practice on.

Wandering through the dungeons Bellatrix eventually spotted a abandoned and rusted over suit of armor.

Holding out her crooked wand and placing it to her voice box she whispered “sonophorous” and then after thinking for a moment. “Dumbledore is a bore.”

She then pulled the wand away from her throat and placed it onto the help of the suit of armor.

“Locomotor.” She whispered again. To her delight the suit immediately began to march around chanting. “Dumbledore is a bore! Dumbledore is a bore!”

Repressing a laugh, she pushed it in the direction of the Slytherin common room. She was halfway there when she heard footsteps. Abandoning the chanting suit she ducked behind a tapestry as two students walked past.

As they heard the statues chanting, they stopped. Bellatrix held her breath, desperate not to be found out.

“This is pretty funny.” She heard one student whisper.

“You know what would make it even funnier? Brining into the dining hall.”

They laughed as Bellatrix’s eyes widened in horror. She waited until their footsteps faded and immediately ran back to the common room where Rita was sitting on one of the leather couches reading.

“I think you may want to come with me to the dining hall. I’ll explain on the way.”

Rita grinned eagerly. “oh, what did you do?”

As they rushed to the dining hall Rita put her hand over her mouth. “Did you by chance lose a suit of armor chanting about Dumbledore?”

“Maybe?” Bellatrix offered, giving her a sheepish look.

Rita laughed. “well, whoever you lost it to decided to make more and put them in the dining hall.

Sure enough, marching around the hall were five suits of armor all chanting about Dumbledore. A red-faced Flitwick was red in the face and jumping up attempting to end the enchantment.

Bellatrix let out a small giggle. “We should probably go back to the common room before we become suspects.”

“I guess so.” Rita muttered, displeased to have to leave a scene with so much drama bound to unfold. “At least now we know I don’t need to learn the Patronus to do the spell.”

Chapter 37 - Dance With The Devil

Chapter Notes

> if you follow my Tiktok you know I was out with a ear infection this week so thats why there hasn't been in an update in awhile, regardless I hope you enjoy and love you all <3

Andromeda squirmed in her seat. The hard bench they had been provided with for the potion exam was all she could think of instead of other things like maybe the actual potion she was supposed to be remembering how to make. She didn't' have to actually make the forgetfulness potion, that had been submitted to Slughorn previously. She did have to write down the process for her exam and rather ironically was having trouble remembering.

As she stared at the empty parchment sitting in front of her, she blinked slowly. Giving herself a mental shove, she decided to start. Writing her name. She could do that. As she began to write out in looping cursive a metal creaking sound startled her and her quill shot across the parchment, effectively ruining it.

Her eyes shot up in irritation, ready to glare a hole through whoever had just made this exam even more difficult when she gasped. The rest of the class had turned their attention to the disturbance as well.

One of the suits of armor had busted into the classroom and was marching up to the front. Slughorn moved up from his seat spluttering protest and patting his pockets obviously searching for his wand.

The helm of the suit of armor opened up and it began to speak in a voice which Andromeda noted with amusement somehow managed to sound rusted, "Cassandra Blackthorn has been cheating in her potions class all year, in fact I think if you examine her quill right now you would see that she is using a potions help quill."

At that announcement the suit of armor promptly turned around and left the classroom.

Slughorn, who had just found his wand and was now holding it out pointlessly turned to face Cassandra.

“Your quill please Miss Blackthorn.” Cassandra looked like she was ready to hurl that mornings breakfast and hastily handed over her quill.

Andromeda observed the sudden rush of events quietly and was surprised when someone moved over to her desk quickly.

While Slughorn was busy examining the suspicious quill, Tonks had snuck over to her desk.

“What are you doing over here?” Andromeda hissed.

He gave her a cheeky grin and whispered in her ear: “five times anti-clockwise not four.”

Andromeda’s eyebrows shot up again and she felt a small smile creeping over her face. She turned to thank him, but he had already sat down at his desk again. He did, however, turn his head and give her a small nod which she returned.

“Alright,” Slughorn began from the front of the class. “It would appear that miss Blackthorn was unfairly accused of cheating. Given the disturbance I will allow you ten more minutes each to finish your work instead of five. Please get back to work and don’t allow this disturbance to affect your work.”

Grumbles came from some of the students who no doubt were hoping that suits of armor interrupting were a good enough reason for an exam to be cancelled. Andromeda, who had already fixed her mistake thanks to Tonks, was happy to sit for a moment and contemplate his kind act. Once she had exhausted possible reasons for him helping her, she felt worried rise through her stomach as she realized her sister had probably been the one behind the helpful distraction.

Bellatrix and Rita rushed out of their charms class giggling. Or rather Bellatrix smiled while Rita giggled.

“Merlin did you see the way McGonagall burst into the class.”

Bellatrix nodded, her grin spreading. “Yeah, she definitely thought she was gonna catch us.”

Rita's smile faded. "Well, I don't think she knew it was us. She was just hoping to catch whoever it was."

Bellatrix gave her a quick upturned smile. "Yeah, course."

After a few moments of walking through the halls in contented silence Bellatrix glanced to her side again only to see Rita already staring at her. Drawing her eyebrows together she muttered "What?" at Rita.

Rita shrugged, pulling her blue eyes away from Bellatrix's own. "Oh nothing." a pause. "Unless you want to walk past Dumbledore's office and see if he's looking for us."

Bellatrix tilted her head as she felt a rare grin growing on her face. "Nothing would delight me more."

The girls began the journey up to Dumbledore's office amused by the teachers who were running back and forth still dealing with the last suits of armor still shouting out things like that. "Stephanie was kissing Grace when she told Tim they were studying!" and "McGonagall has tartan knickers."

Bellatrix winced at that one. Perhaps next time they should be a little more discerning with which submissions they chose.

They turned down the hallway that held Dumbledore's office.

"Where exactly is it?" Bellatrix asked, craning her neck in an attempt to spot the entrance in the dim hallway.

"A bit further down I think." Rita said, pulling Bellatrix forward into the dim light.

They had almost reached the end of the hallway when they heard a loud creaking sound.

Rita flashed her eyes at Bellatrix. "Someone's coming out, be quiet." Both girls stood flush against the wall breathing shallowly in an attempt not to be spotted. Bellatrix could make out two male voices.

“Thank you for stopping by Tom but I’m afraid the position is currently filled.” Dumbledore’s voice rang out, a tone of warning lacing the courteous words.

“Perfectly understandable sir.” Came the voice of the other man, pitched higher than Dumbledore’s but holding that same tone of warning and malice. “If circumstances ever change, please don’t hesitate to contact me.”

Bellatrix heard Dumbledore mutter something else to the man, Tom she supposed his name was. Then the creaking of the office entrance closing was heard, and footsteps got closer to the girls. They held their breath as the man passed.

Bellatrix noticed as he walked past them that he was tall with short brown hair and was noticeably wearing Slytherin colors. Perhaps he was an alumni. As he turned around, she noticed his eyes had almost a red gleam to the... wait shit as he turned around?!?! The man had noticed them and was making direct contact.

“Hello girls. What are you doing on the headmaster's office floor?”

Stepping out of the shadows Rita stood in front of Bellatrix. “Lost?” She offered hopefully.

The man laughed; Bellatrix winced at the sound. It was nasally and highly insincere.

“I doubt that, but it’s none of my business.”

Bellatrix gave him a small smile to indicate her appreciation.

“Is there anything else we can do for you sir?”

The man shrugged and waved them off. “No no be on your way girls, but before you go do tell me are you purebloods?”

Bellatrix lifted her chin high in the air and scoffed at the implication she could be anything but.

“Do you really need to ask?”

The man smiled to himself as he muttered “I see.”

As he walked away Bellatrix looked to Rita in confusion, feeling as if she had just passed some sort of test.

Chapter 38 - You Have A Way of Coming Easily To Me

Chapter Notes

gasps* two chapters in two days?!?!!? what is this miracle.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andromeda had silently congratulated herself on how many quiet hiding spots she had been able to find in one year of school. She had found that the easiest way to hide in a school swarming with people was to hide in plain sight. A swarm of students buzzing with conversation and gossip (normally provided by her sister) was too busy to notice a first year reading in between some pillars.

If she really wanted to be secluded, she liked the areas behind the tapestries. She wasn't sure why so many of them had little alcoves behind them. Perhaps the founders had intended well with them but the amount of time she found snogging couples behind them often made her wonder what their though process was. However, if there wasn't a passionate couple behind them, they were very peaceful and where she completed most of her work.

She was on her way to one of her favorite tapestries to finish up the remainder of her work for the year when she heard a voice calling out her name. She ignored it at first, but the voice called out again and she turned to see the two girls who had said they were Tonk's friends waving to her.

The girls got closer to her, and Andromeda put on what she hoped was a friendly smile.

"Erm, Hi. How are you?" She said inwardly cursing at how stiff she sounded.

The girls didn't seem to notice and if they did, they didn't care.

"We're doing great." said Jones. At least Andromeda thought her name was Jones.

"Listen Andromeda," Said the other girl "We were wondering if you wanted to join us and Ted in the library. We're finishing up our last bit of work for the year."

Andromeda froze, weighing her options carefully. She didn't really know these people and they were Hufflepuffs who probably weren't purebloods. She definitely wasn't supposed to be studying or even talking to them, but she hadn't met any Slytherins all year who she had gotten along with, and she would really like to finish the year with at least one friend.

Vance frowned. “Never mind, I’m sorry I asked.” Both girls turned and began to walk away as Andromeda fought against the bubbling pit of nervousness in her stomach. Wincing in disbelief about what she was about to do she called out.

“Wait.”

Vance didn’t turn around, but Jones did and gave her a small smile. “Change your mind?” She offered helpfully.

Andromeda nodded.

“C’mon then.” She offered nodding her head as if to summon Andromeda. Andromeda walked towards them.

Andromeda surprised with a wide smile as she began to walk in stride with the other two girls.

They arrived in the library which was unsurprisingly quite empty. Nobody really felt inclined to spend their last week at Hogwarts for the year in the stuffy library with the librarian staring them down from her desk.

Andromeda hesitated as they reached the tables most commonly used for studying.

“I thought you said Tonks was going to be here too?”

Jones grinned at her, “Oh yeah, he is. We prefer to study in one of the areas further back in the library. It’s more comfortable and we find it easier to study when you don’t have the most unpleasant woman to ever exist breathing down your neck.”

Vance scoffed in agreement at that. “Follow me,” She offered, “Ted told me where we’d be studying.”

As they turned through the dusty aisles of the library, they finally came into an alcove surrounded by bookshelves but with chairs that looked significantly more comfortable than Andromeda had experienced at Hogwarts so far. Sitting in one of the chairs writing on a piece of parchment and using a board as a hard surface was Tonks, who grinned brightly when he saw the girls.

“Andromeda! You joined us!”

Andromeda nodded, though she was confused at his excitement. “Erm, yeah I was studying anyways so I figured I may as well join you guys.”

He gave her another sunshine grin. “The more the merrier I always say. Did we all want to work on the same subject?”

Andromeda was surprised at how easily she fell into a comfortable environment with the rest of them. She had assumed she would be intruding in an already carefully forged and established group environment, but everyone let her speak when she wanted to and seemed to be content with the fact that that was hardly ever.

Eventually she realized that she had finished all her remaining work and made to pack up her things.

“Where are you going?” Jones protested.

Andromeda blushed awkwardly. “Oh, well I finished my work, and I don’t want to bother you, so I’ll just go back to my common room now.”

“Nooo.” Vance whined out holding out her arm from where she sat as if to grab Andromeda and keep her in the library.

Andromeda let out a laugh but suppressing her smile continued. “Really, I’m tired. Might lie down before Supper.”

As she gathered her things and made to leave, she gave Tonks, who was staring at her as if she was some great mystery, a small wave.

He snapped out of his gaze and returned her wave. “See you around Andromeda.” He offered kindly.

“You are too!” She said, cursing how excited she sounded at the idea. As she walked away, she felt the sinking feeling that often followed her return. Why on earth had they invited her in the first place. Probably because they knew how much she struggled and wanted to feel better about their own work. Or they knew how few friends she had and felt sorry for her. She resolved not to bother them again.

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading I luv u all.

If you want to see quillkiller fanart follow my Instagram: nowyouhangfrommylips
If you want headcannons or to see me thirsting after various marauders follow my Twitter: nyhfmlltgob
And if you want lots of angsty videos follow my TikTok: thegardens_of_babylon

Chapter 39 - If You Just Said You're Sorry

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bellatrix groaned and rolled out of bed. Rita was tiptoeing out of the room, obviously trying not to wake the others.

“Where are you going?” Bellatrix muttered as she attempted to rub the sleep from her eyes.

Rita started for a moment; no doubt surprised she had woken Bellatrix.

“Going to do my incantation. Wanna come?”

Bellatrix nodded. Mornings didn’t typically agree with her and so she preferred to stick to non-verbal communication until at least nine in the morning.

As they walked up the stairs of the castle and into the main hall, where the sunrise was already streaming through the tall windows, Bellatrix gave Rita a small smile.

“It’s really an impressive bit of magic you’re doing.” she offered, looking away from Rita’s piercing gaze.

Though her head was turned away she could still feel the other girls' glittering eyes watching her. “Maybe I’m just an impressive witch.”

Bellatrix bit her lip as if to hold back the words she wanted to say but decided to say them anyways. “You are. Impressive I mean.”

Rita’s face began to morph into one Bellatrix recognized all too well. She spoke with a teasing tone. “Well, that’s high praises coming from the Most Ancient and Noble Bellatrix Black.”

Bellatrix scrunched her nose up at Rita as she felt the prickling heat of a blush dusting her cheeks.

“Shut up and focus before you miss your chance for the incantation and have to start all over again.”

Rita rolled her eyes but followed Bellatrix's prompting and held her wand over her heart muttering "Animito Animato Animagus"

"Done?" Bellatrix queried, cocking and eyebrow at the other girl.

Rita nodded back. "Yep, let's get out of here. Wanna go for a walk."

"Sure." Bellatrix responded, allowing Rita to slip her arm around Bellatrix's and link their elbows.

As they walked down one of the paths that led towards the bridge the sun rose and so did the temperature, causing both girls to quickly shed their robes. It was a Saturday, so they were free to do whatever and wear whatever they liked.

As they neared the bridge Rita's chatter rather uncharacteristically died down.

"What's wrong?" Bellatrix asked her.

She shrugged. "You'll wright to me this summer, right?"

Bellatrix laughed, "Yeah, Course."

"Great."

A few moments passed as the silence billowed around them until Rita pointed to the hill nearest to the castle. "Is that your sister?"

Bellatrix squinted at the hooded figure on the hill for a few moments before responding. "Yeah, I think so."

Rita stared at her thoughtfully. "You should go say hi. She misses you."

Bellatrix rolled her eyes but knew Rita was right. "Fine. See you later." she muttered as she marched over to her sister.

"Bye Trix!" Rita called out, the sound of glee at getting Bellatrix to do what she wanted clear in her voice.

Andromeda had decided to go for a walk that morning to clear her mind and prepare for returning home for summer. As she had walked out to near the bridge, she had noticed her sister and Rita Skeeter walking and laughing together and tried to ignore the pang of jealousy at how quickly Rita had swept her sister away from her.

She had turned away eventually, the sight of the camaraderie being too much to bear. She was getting ready to return to the castle when she jumped in surprise at the sound of her sister calling her name.

“Andy! Wait.” Bellatrix called.

Andromeda turned and stared at her expectantly. “What do you need?”

Bellatrix took a moment to catch her breath from the run up the hill and then tilted her head with a confused smile. “I don’t need anything. I just wanted to say hi.”

Andromeda scoffed. “Well excuse me for thinking you must need something because you’ve barely said three sentences to me all term.”

Bellatrix sighed and moved closer. “Andy I’m sorry. Honestly, I am.”

Andromeda just pursed her lips.

“I just figured you would want a chance to break away from the family and make your own friends and have your own opportunities.”

Andromeda rolled her eyes. “Why didn’t you ask me Bella? If you had, you would’ve known I just wanted to talk to my big sister. I don’t even have any friends here.”

Bellatrix reached out her hand and placed it on her sister's shoulder. “You’re right I should’ve. I’m sorry. But we have a chance to start fresh next year, right?”

Andromeda nodded stiffly, willing the tears welling in her eyes to disappear.

“Right. Next year then.”

Bellatrix rested her head on her sister's shoulder. “Want to hear a story about me hexing Lestrange.”

Andromeda laughed; voice no longer thick with tears. “Merlin yes.”

Chapter End Notes

thanks as always for reading! love you all lots <3

Chapter 40 - They Don't Know How Much I'll Miss You

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“So” Rita started, voice hesitant. “Last day before summer hols”

Bellatrix nodded from where she sat at her own bed, which was strewn with clothes and textbooks still needing to be packed up.

“Yes, I know.”

Rita rolled her eyes. “Okay, Merlin. Why are you in such a foul mood?”

Bellatrix turned her head sharply to face Rita, feeling her curls bounce around her face from the speed.

“Because I’m going to be stuck with my family all summer? And in case you hadn’t gathered from the Christmas event you attended they aren’t the most pleasant group to be around.”

Rita’s eyebrows raised sympathetically, and Bellatrix tried not to be annoyed by it.

“I’m sorry I didn’t think about that. I’ll write you lots and so will Zabini and Carrow. It’ll be just like when you’re here.”

Bellatrix nodded, though her shoulders were still tensed at the idea of being home.

“I’ll try my best to respond but I’m going to be really busy with tutors and social events.”

Rita gave her a teasing smile. “We understand. The duties of being a member of high society come first always.”

Bellatrix rolled her eyes. “Shut up.”

In response Rita threw some of Bellatrix’s clothes onto her bed.

“Finish packing.”

Bellatrix scowled at the other girl as she walked away.

As she folded robes and shirts and placed them neatly in her trunk she began to worry about her summer again. It's not that she wasn't happy to go home. Everyone else was excited to go home so of course she was. But she couldn't seem to escape the dread that was pooling in her stomach. She thought over the year obsessively, all the things her parents wouldn't have approved of every little mistake. She worried that they would somehow know and punish her for every little mistake. Hogwarts was her freedom, but she had forgotten that it wasn't a permanent escape and now she found herself being sent back home with no time to prepare herself.

She closed the trunk and sighed, staring off into space as Rita walked back into the room. Rita stared at her with almost immediate understanding and sat beside her. In a strange wave of bravery Bellatrix leaned her head on Rita's shoulder. To Rita's credit she didn't show any surprise and merely patted Bellatrix's head as she let out a sigh.

"You don't have to carry the world on your shoulders Trix."

Bellatrix gave her a small smile and muttered. "I don't want to, but I'm not the one who put the weight there so I'm not the one who can take it off."

Rita returned her smile. "Then let me carry some of the weight for you."

Bellatrix stared up at her in surprise, opening her mouth a few times before settling for "Yeah, okay."

All four girls sat in the now empty dorm room. Carrow, Zabini, and Bellatrix sat on their respective beds while Rita wrote something at the vanity. Getting up she handed each girl a piece of paper.

"Here." She began. "These each have everyone's name and address on them, and I swear to Merlin if I don't receive at least one letter from each of you, you won't live till next summer."

Each girl gave a small smile at that.

"Promise." Bellatrix muttered, staring straight at Rita. When Rita looked up, she looked away quickly.

"Let's head to the carriages."

The horseless carriages began to fill with students and the girls hastily searched for one that wasn't full yet. After successfully finding one they piled in.

Carrow and Zabini chatted away while Bellatrix stared out the window at the fog. Bellatrix was startled when she felt a hand move over her shoulder but grinned when she realized it was Rita writing in the fog building up on the window. A small smiling face was now on the window making it quite difficult for her to look out the window and brood.

"Funny." She muttered to Rita.

"I know." The other girl grinned; white teeth gleaming.

The carriage came to a stop and the girls got out stretching despite the short ride.

"Right, let's find a spot." Rita demanded, taking control as per usual.

As the girls attempted to push through the horde of students trying to get onto the train Bellatrix spotted Andromeda.

"Andy!" She called out, waving her arm so she could be seen over all the other students. "Andy wants to join us?"

Andromeda pushed her way over but gave Bellatrix a small smile saying. "It's okay some people from my study group want me to join them."

Bellatrix cocked her head. "I didn't know you were in a Slytherin study group."

Andromeda gave her a tense smile. "Erm. They're mostly Hufflepuffs actually."

Bellatrix stared down at her sister for a moment. "Right. Well see you in a couple of hours then."

Andromeda nodded waiting for Bellatrix to leave before letting out a sigh of relief.

Bellatrix slid the door open to her compartment looking slightly preoccupied.

"Andromeda not coming?" Rita questioned, looking up from the book she had opened.

Bellatrix shrugged. "Apparently she'd rather spend her time with Hufflepuffs."

Carrow let out a snort. "Her loss."

Bellatrix nodded sitting down next to Rita.

“Yeah, I guess so.”

The whistle blew and the train gave a lurch as it set forwards. Bellatrix leaned over Rita’s shoulder and began to read with her but eventually the lull of the train and the sound of quiet chatter coaxed Bellatrix to sleep.

She woke to Rita pushing her head off her shoulder.

“Hey Trix.”

“What.” Bellatrix mumbled eyes still closed.

“We’re here.”

Bellatrix opened her eyes to roll them and groaned.

“Amazing. Perfect. So excited.”

Rita laughed at her. “I know. But were gonna wright each other.”

Bellatrix nodded as she reached up for her trunk. Both girls carried them out and Rita reached for a hug but drew her eyebrows together as Bellatrix hastily pulled away.

“My parents are here. They’re watching me.”

Rita nodded. “Course, See you in September then.”

Bellatrix nodded then walked away. Rita couldn’t help but indulge the spark of disappointment at Bellatrix’s quick dismissal before the brunette turned and shouted out.

“I’ll write to you!”

Rita gave her a small smile and wave and waited ‘till the other girl was with her parents before turning and going to find her own.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading! Ily all <3

Chapter 41 - If I'm On Fire, You'll Be Made Of Ashes Too

Chapter Notes

> Hi! I'm back. In case you haven't noticed by now there is a very good reason there is no update for this schedule for this fic because it is mostly tied to my very fickle emotions :) please bear with me and enjoy this chapter.
>
> TW: CHILD ABUSE IN THE FORM OF SPELLS PLEASE DONT READ IF THIS WILL TRIGGER YOU

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hello father." Bellatrix said stiffly, looking up and meeting her father's stern gaze.

"You're five minutes late." He responded, not returning her gaze.

"She's not the train conductor." Shot Andromeda from where she had appeared next to Bellatrix.

Bellatrix shot Andromeda a look. Of course, she had to antagonize her father two seconds into their summer.

"I'm sorry father, it won't happen again."

Cygnus didn't respond, too busy staring down Andromeda in disapproval.

Andromeda seemed to realize the gravity of her words and ducked her head, eyes wide as she mumbled: "sorry father."

Cygnus simply scoffed and grabbed each of the girls by an arm as they apparated home.

Bellatrix couldn't help but shudder a little bit as she realized she was home. The cold air wrapped itself around her body making it feel as if it was December and not a warm summer day. The dark lighting of the home cast shadows on her father's cheekbones making him seem even more disapproving than usual.

"I have work to do." He muttered. "Go greet your mother and we will discuss your school year at a later time."

As soon as he had left the room Bellatrix spun on her heel and stared at Andromeda.

“What the hell is wrong with you?”

Andromeda flashed her eyes defiantly at her sister. “Sorry for one out of place sentence Bella.”

“It’s not just a sentence Andy, you know that. You’re smarter than this.”

Andromeda shrugged scowling. “Well now it’s done so we just have to deal with it.”

Bellatrix pursed her lips. Right as if they would be dealing with it. No. What Andromeda didn’t seem to realize was that Bellatrix faced the consequences for all of their actions.

“Let's go find mother” She demanded, grabbing Andromeda’s hand harder than was strictly necessary.

The girls wandered into the drawing room where Narcissa was sitting at the piano with a tutor. Their mother sat on the sofa near the piano frowning at the tutor.

“Hello Mother.” Bellatrix called out.

Her mother gave her a small pinched smile. “Bellatrix and Andromeda welcome home. Narcissa you may stop for a moment and greet your sisters.”

“Andy!” Narcissa shrieked gleefully from the piano running up to hug her sister only to wince as she was hit with a stinging hex. All three girls winced as their mother called out:

“I didn’t say to throw all decorum out the window, I said greet your sisters.”

Bellatrix looked at Narcissa who had tears welling in her eyes and shook her head slightly. Narcissa nodded and blinked the beginnings of her tears away.

“Hello Bellatrix Hello Andromeda. How was Hogwarts?”

Andromeda gave her sister a smile. “So interesting Cissa. You’re gonna love it once you’re old enough.”

Narcissa's frown split into a grin. "Really?"

"Yes, you'll learn a lot Narcissa." Bellatrix offered receiving a small smile from the younger girl in response.

Their mother stood up and walked towards the tutor who was standing awkwardly at the piano. While Narcissa and Andromeda began to chat, Bellatrix inched closer to overhear the conversation.

"Accidental magic, you know how it is." Her mother was saying. "Happens to the best of us. I'm sure that you'll remember not to tell anyone?"

The tutor nodded hesitantly. Her mother continued. "Of course, you're doing such a wonderful job with Narcissa difficult child she is. Perhaps a pay raise is due."

The tutor nodded in understanding and Bellatrix rolled her eyes. Ah mother. If you can't solve the problem, throw money at it.

She walked closer to the piano, "Hello mother."

"Bellatrix." Her mother said, giving her a rare smile. "Would you like to show your sister how someone who is competent plays piano."

Bellatrix gave her a thin smile. This was always how it was, she reminded herself as she sat at the piano bench. She began to play but it was second nature to her, and her mind began to wander. It was always like this. Never "Oh Bellatrix you're good at piano please play for us." Always "Bellatrix let me use you as a device to humiliate your sister surely this won't affect your relationship with her at all." She finished playing and looked up at her mother's impassive face. As payment for her troubles, she received a small nod which she knew meant she was dismissed.

She got up and brushed past her sisters, headed for her own room. She felt the sinking fear she was so used to in this house as she passed her father's study. Five more steps. Four more steps. Three more steps. Two more "Bellatrix." Damn. So much for talking to him later.

She walked slowly into the office. "Hello father, what did you need."

"Sit." he said sternly.

She sat on the small chair facing the opposite side of the side of the desk he was sitting at. He had a sheet of parchment in front of him that he turned to face her as she sat.

"These are things that you need to include in your little magazine in the next school year. Eyebrows furrowed Bellatrix grabbed the paper and scanned over it quickly. Mostly

pureblood ideology, stuff she had drilled into her since she was a baby.

“Consider it done father.”

He simply grunted and waved her away. She left the office grateful that she had left far more unscathed than last time. Still, she was having a hard time envisioning Rita letting her have so much sway in the Rumor Mill. Maybe she would have to send some persuasive letters this summer.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked it <3 I'll try my best to update more often but am not making any promises I can't keep :)

Chapter 42 - We're All Bored

Bellatrix woke up to the tapping of what was no doubt long house elf fingers on her door. She groaned, bleary eyed and sat up in bed. Her bed. At home. Ugh.

“Come in.” She mumbled through a surprised yawn. As the house elf walked in timidly, she took a quick look at the window to see that the sun hadn’t even risen yet.

“Is there a reason I’m being woken up this early?” she muttered, snatching the letter out of the quaking house elf’s fingers.

“Miss, your mother is saying you is needing to get up early. You is having a history of magic tutor at nine miss.”

Bellatrix scoffed. “Wonderful. You may leave.”

Trust mother to make sure no fun, or Merlin forbid relaxation happen this summer. She opened up the letter and was delighted to see it was from Rita.

“Dear Trix, I know it’s only been a day but I do miss your scowling face and rude remarks so much already. All jokes aside I was hoping to get some plans for the rumor mill done this summer that way we don’t have to spend as much time on it during school next year. As much as a despise the idea I’m sure we’re going to have more work to do with it being third year and all. Anyways let me know what ideas you have. See you soon! - Rita.

Bellatrix felt the corners of her lips twitch as she folded up the parchment and placed it into her desk. Not only did the letter dissuade her fears that Rita would get bored of writing to her this summer, but it also gave her a solution to her problem with fathers little list.

She tied her hair loosely with a green ribbon at the base of her neck and found the clothes her mother had picked for her for the day, green as well. Bellatrix couldn’t help but wonder how her mother had managed to stay so loyal to a colour for her whole life.

She descended the staircase and went down to one of the family's smaller dining rooms. There was a bowl of fruit waiting for her which she sat and ate silently. She hated waking up early, but she couldn’t deny there was something peaceful about almost having the house to

herself. Her thoughts were interrupted by the scrape of a chair and her neck snapped up quickly. She locked eyes with her mothers.

“History of magic at nine o clock sharp Bellatrix.”

Bellatrix nodded, getting up “Of course mother.”

“Oh, and Bellatrix,” He mother called out as Bellatrix went out tonight. “I expect your appearance to be more put together by six pm because we have a guest coming.”

Bellatrix groaned inwardly. “Yes mother, no problem.”

The day passed agonizingly slow. Bellatrix’s tutors were all old men who treated her as if she was six and not twelve. She always had to prove herself to them. Prove that she was smart and prove that she should be three grades ahead of what they were teaching her. With no challenge academically, she basically just spent the day listening to them drone on about things she was certain could be taught in a more interesting way. Finally the last one left for he day and she was free to go fix her appearance for their guest.

She wandered back up to her room and saw Andy getting ready in her own. She tapped lightly on the door frame.

“Hey.”

Andromeda jumped slightly, dropping her hair which she had just been about to pull through an elastic.

“Hey. How were your tutors.”

Bellatrix drew her wand across her throat and let her tongue hang out of her mouth. “Avada me next time.”

Andromeda laughed. “So pretty much as bad as mine then.”

Bellatrix sat next to her on the stool in front of Andromeda’s vanity.

“Fix my hair for me?” She asked, giving her sister a small smile.

“Course.” Andromeda offered.

Half an hour later they entered the dining room and Bellatrix’s eyebrows shot up quickly as she realized that the guest was the man she had run into at school. He was smilling at her mother and she was laughing at him far too hard for a woman who had no sense of humour.

So it was either money or politics tonight. Bellatrix consigned herself to a dreary evening. She pulled her chair out and sat, directing a small smile at their guest.

“Hello, I’m Bellatrix.”

He gave her a similar look to the one he had shown when she first saw him at Hogwarts. The one that made her feel as if he was trying to learn her deepest secrets. She suppressed a shudder and he gave her a disturbing smile.

“Hello Bellatrix. I believe we’ve met briefly before.” He spoke, voice nasally.

“Yes I believe so. It’s a pleasure to have you in our home.” She offered, glancing quickly to her mother who nodded in approval. Bellatrix knew this was her signal to stop speaking for the evening.

“So Tom,” Her mother began. “Tell us exactly what legislation you are looking to promote in regards to half breeds.”

Politics then, Bellatrix reasoned, tuning the conversation out. Across the table Andromeda mimed snoring for a moment, bringing a small smile to Bellatrix’s face.

Hours later the man sat up and walked with Bellatrix’s father to his study where they would no doubt discuss ministry policies for at least another hour. After they men had left Bellatrix’s mother snapped her head around and stared down Bellatrix.

“How do you know Mr. Riddle?” she snapped.

“I saw him leaving Headmaster Dumbledore’s office during the school year. We had a brief conversation.”

Her mother pursed her lips. “Well, it’s good you made a good impression. We are going to be seeing a lot more of him.”

“Why?” Bellatrix inquired, knowing she was pushing boundaries.

“He is the future of the pureblood wizarding world.”

“I see.” Bellatrix said. “May I be excused?”

Druella nodded, “Yes of course child. You have an astronomy tutor coming at five tomorrow.”

Bellatrix was gratefull for the fact that she had already turned her back to her mother so she couldn’t see the grimace she made at the mention of another early morning.

43 - Never Impressed by Me Acing Your Tests

Chapter Notes

> Hey lovelies here's a chapter for you! Content warning for degrading language from a parent to a child. Please don't read if something like that is going to trigger you <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Andromeda knew that Bellatrix had had a pretty demanding summer so far. She had seen tutor after tutor go through the study room and leave her sister exhausted by the end of the day. However, she had been a little more lucky. She had one tutor every day for the morning and her afternoons were free for her to do whatever she pleased. Today she and Narcissa were playing hide and seek in the manor.

She wandered around the top floor of the house, trying to shake the unsettling feeling of the eyes of all the portraits following her .

“Cissa!” She called out gleefully , ”Are you up here?"

Silence.She wandered a bit further down the dim corridor and saw that one of the doors in the hallways saw just slightly ajar.

“Gotcha" she whispered as she silently pushed the door open. She scanned the room briefly and grinned triumphantly as she saw slippered feet poking out from underneath the hem of one of the curtains. Quietly as she could she tiptoed over to the curtain and yanked it open.

“Ha!” she exclaimed, looking down and expecting to be greeted by her sister's wide blue eyes. Instead, she found herself looking down at Narcissa's empty shoes.

“What on earth?” She muttered, swiveling around quickly to see Narcissa tumbling out of the closet at the other end of the room. Andromeda didn’t even have time to speak before Narcissa was speeding out of the room on the broom.

Andromeda spent a moment standing with her jaw open in shock before running out the doorway and after her younger sister.

She took off in a sprint down the corridor and after Narcissa, trailing her hand on the walls for traction as she hurled herself around the corner. She could hear her sister’s giggles as she ran down the stairs and spotted her. Panting as she tried too keep up she reached out her hand too grab the dusty twigs at the end of the broomstick. Just as she was about to grab the broom it stopped its speed and promptly crashed Andromeda onto the floor bringing Narcissa with her.

Both girls landed on top of each other on the cold stone floor. Andromeda slowly tilted her head up to see her mother frowning above them. Andromeda bit her lip nervously.

“Hello mother.”

“What is wrong with you.” Druella hissed. “Not only can you barely do your own lessons but you have to bring your younger sister down with you and tear up this house?”

Drulla grabbed Andromeda’s arm and yanked the small girl to her feet.

Andromeda tilted her chin and narrowed her eyes at her mother in defiance.

Druella grabbed Andromeda’s face causing her to flinch for a moment. If Narcissa hadn’t been standing right there Andromeda would have said something nasty and antagonized her mother a bit more but she didn’t want Narcissa to be scared or blame herself.

“Sorry mother. Sorry I can’t be perfect like Bellatrix.”

Ah. THat was the antagonizing thing she wasn’t supposed to stay.

“Well I’m glad we’re on the same page.” Druella hissed at her. She removed her cold fingers from Andromeda’s face and pulled her by the arm.

As they walked Drulla ranted away.

“I’m at my wits end with you Andromeda. I do try, you know. I want to be a good mother to you but you’re just so impossible to deal with. Every little thing you do is like a knife in my side. Your selfishness astounds me. I can barely deal with it. If you keep this up I’m sending you to Orion and Walburga’s for the rest of the summer. You think I’m oppressive? Wait until you're with them.”

They had arrived at Andromeda’s bedroom “I’m sorry mother. Please let me stay here. I’ll try harder.”

Druella scoffed at her. “You won't try to do better. You will do better. You won’t have any choice but to be better. This is the room you will spend the rest of the summer in. Your tutors will come here. Your meals will come here. I’m done dealing with this insolence.”

Of course Andromeda didn’t want this. She also obviously didn't want too make her mother more angry but, there was something about getting her mother agitated that made her feel just the tiniest more in control of these fits of rage.

So she smirked at her mother and muttered. “Great, I love this room.”

Druella’s nostrils flared. “You will regret that.”

The door slammed shut and AdAndromeda could hear the mutterings of an locking spell behind the thick wood. Brilliant.

She was full of amazing decisions today. Bellatrix was right she has got to learn to be more passive but it was just so difficult too remember in the moment. And there was something so gratifying about seeing her mother’s nostrils flare and her pale skin flush with rage. She supposed she would have to teach herself how to stop though.

She heard a soft tapping at the door and walked towards it.

“Who is it?” she whispered.

“It’s Cissa.” She heard a small voice respond.

“I’m really really sorry Andy. Bella says that it was my fault you're in trouble and she’s right I never should have flown the broom and now Mother’s so mad.”

Andromeda let out a small smile even though she knew Narcissa couldn’t see it. “Relax Cissa. Bella is always stressed about making mother happy and look at her. She doesn’t seem very happy does she?.”

“Guess not.” Narcissa responded through the door.

“Let's just focus on us okay. You and I can have as much fun as we want and mother can’t ever do anything about that. Deal?”

“Deal.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope you guys enjoyed, thank you for reading. Hope you enjoyed Andromeda's mommy issues sponsored by my mommy issues. Also Andy girl you are making a lot of promises that idk if your gonna be able to keep. Love u all see u next time :)

Chapter 44 - I got issues and chips on both of my shoulders

Chapter Notes

> hey lovelies! Thanks for reading! I looked back at the chapter from last week today and am so embarrassed by the amount of spelling mistakes. My computer broke so I was using a really old one and the word processor was so slow it wasn't catching spelling mistakes. I'm so sorry about that. Anyways hope you enjoy this one that doesn't have any spelling mistakes (as far as I'm aware)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=725d5a0b00c7478b

In celebration of the last week of summer holidays Druella had decided to have Orion and Walburga over, much to Bellatrix's dismay. Orion and Walburga leaked unpleasantness into the air as if someone had just cast nox. Bellatrix could feel them sucking the small bits of light that remained out of the manor and was sure it would put her in a foul mood for her last week before school started. Regardless of what she preferred they would be arriving at any moment, so she put on a smile and began to walk to the drawing room where she would be playing piano.

That was the other exhausting part of these family gatherings. Bellatrix was her mother's doll, and every year it was her job to show the latest model and stir up jealousy in her brother. Bellatrix would perform all her tricks and then be dismissed to watch over her cousins and "try and teach them something useful."

Sirius and Regulus were alright she supposed, but they were small and loud. She preferred it when the Rosiers came over, Evan was a much quieter baby. She hated Walburga's eyes, the unsettling way they widened and the way her lips curled into her smile. Bellatrix also hated it when people commented on how similar they looked to each other. The main reason being that Walburga was the perfect picture of Black family madness.

In order to keep the family's bloodline pure over the years there had been many cases of inbreeding. Bellatrix knew this as did most of the wizarding world. Normally the magic coursing through their veins protected them from the effects people would normally suffer from or it did in the cases of other purebloods, however, the Black family believed in going

big or going home. As in, there wasn't really a bride or groom's side at most family weddings.

This had led to the Black family madness. You could see it a bit in all of them really. Bellatrix could at least, and she could feel it in herself. She could feel the magic flowing out of her core and into her veins but sometimes instead of the pleasant thrum of power under her skin, all she could feel was turbulence. It was as if she was wrestling with her magic to keep it below the surface, keep it tame. She knew this made her dangerous, but it also gave her power. She had resolved long ago to be the first Black to use it to her advantage.

She heard the rush of alarm spread through the manor at the sound of the wards being pushed at. Great. She plastered a polite smile onto her face and attempted to tame some of the frizzier parts of her hair.

“Bellatrix.” Druella called out as the doors to the drawing room opened.

“Bellatrix, come greet your Aunt and Uncle.”

“Let the show begin.” Bellatrix muttered as she followed her mother out the door.

Bellatrix head her head high as Walburga observed her, lips pursed and wide eyes almost bugging out of her head.

“You’ve grown.” She muttered, as if Bellatrix had personally been conspiring all year to grow two inches.

“I suppose.” Bellatrix responded.

Druella cleared her throat.

“It’s lovely to see you Aunt Walburga.” Bellatrix offered.

Walburga nodded. Then snapping her head to look at Druella shot out. “Where is your house elf? I don’t want to deal with him anymore.”

Bellatrix followed the gesture of her long fingers to the pram that was next to her. Regulus was lying there perfectly still and pleasant. If Walburga was tired of him when he was like this what was she like when he was crying, Bellatrix wondered.

Druella snapped and the house elf appeared, “Take Regulus and Sirius to the nursery. Bring Narcissa as well.”

“Yes miss. I is going right away miss.” The elf responded, pushing the pram away.

Druella turned to Bellatrix. “Play the piano now.”

“Yes mother.” Bellatrix responded, walking towards the other side of the room.

As she began to play Cygnus and Orion walked in as well. After a few minutes of conversation, which Bellatrix couldn’t really pick up on over the sound of the piano, Druella waved her fingers and dismissed Bellatrix.

“Lovely to see you again Aunt and Uncle.” she said smiling politely. Walburga gave her a quick nod while Orion ignored her entirely. She pushed down the thrum of anger and left the room.

As she left the room she heard Walburga mutter, “She’s quite good.” To Druella. She couldn’t help but smile a bit at that.

She decided against going to the nursery and instead walked to her bedroom where there was an owl waiting.

“Who are you from?” Bellatrix mused, as she untied the letter from the owl’s leg, absentmindedly giving a small treat from the jar at her windowsill to the owl.

It wasn’t sealed, which meant it was probably from Rita. She opened it, pleased to see she was right.

“Dear Trix,

No, you don’t even get to be mad at me for calling you that. I know you said you’d be busy this summer but one letter? Really? You can do better. Send me one today! I don’t want to see

that owl again until you've sent one back. - Rita"

Bellatrix rolled her eyes at the dramatics of the other girl but walked over to her desk and began to write a response.

"Rita,

I am very sorry for my lack of correspondence over the summer. As it would appear you have forgotten our last conversation, I will remind you that I have had many tutors and almost no free time. While I appreciate your friendship, I do value my sleep more. In regard to your last letter, I think the rumor mill should take a more mature approach this year. I will share more details with you once I see you next week. Enjoy the rest of your holiday. - Cordially, Bellatrix Black"

She reached for the wax on her desk and poured it gently over the envelope, pressing her Black family ring into the rapidly hardening wax.

"Here you go little one." She mumbled to the owl, giving it a small pat on the head as it flew away.

Chapter End Notes

hope you all enjoyed <3

Chapter 45 - The Halls We Once Walked Through

The Black family drawing room was currently full of Bellatrix and Andromeda's things. Clothes folded in piles by two trunks, jewelry sitting in boxes ready to be packed on top, and schoolbooks standing in stacks all around the floor. Andromeda and Bellatrix sat on the sofa while their mother towered over the house elf, who was trembling while packing the girl's clothes into trunks. Earlier in the day's tedious packing process the elf had mistaken Bellatrix's Slytherin tie for Andromeda's and Druella had launched into a tirade. The elf did not appear to be making a swift recovery from the rage of Druella Black.

They were leaving early the next morning and while Bellatrix was looking forward to being back at school, sitting in the cold room on the stiff sofa and spending a whole day with her mother was not her ideal way to end the summer holidays.

Her eyes briefly flickered over to Andromeda's. Bellatrix widened her eyes in annoyance and Andromeda gave her a small smile.

"Are you even paying attention to me?" Druella's grating voice shattered the moment.

"Sorry mother, what were you saying?" Bellatrix responded; voice sickeningly sweet the way she knew her mother hated.

Druella rolled her eyes and pulled her red lips into a sneer, then continued in a very condescending tone.

"I told you, that your permission slip is at the top of your trunk. Do not lose it I will not send another one."

"Thank you, mother." Bellatrix offered.

That was one thing she was looking forward to this year. Hogsmeade was going to be so interesting. Not just because she was looking forward to having some more opportunities to get out of the castle but because of the opportunity to expand with the rumor mill. Of course, there was the benefit of Honeydukes. She gave Andromeda a small grin of excitement to which Andromeda rolled her eyes.

That was another way this year was going to be different. Bellatrix had resolved to be better to Andromeda. She was going to study with her and spend time with her way more. Maybe she would even like to help with the Rumor Mill, Bellatrix mused. The common room would be their haven from home, and she would take care of her sister. Maybe that would absolve her of the way she treated her last year.

“Mother?”

Andromeda’s voice broke Bellatrix from her stupor.

“Now that the trunks are packed may we please be excused?”

Druella sighed again, “I suppose.”

As the girls hastened out, trying to leave before she changed her mind, they heard her muttering.

“No thank you nothing. No thanks for all the things I sacrifice for them.”

Andromeda and Bellatrix locked eyes in disbelief.

“All the things she does for us?” Andromeda asked incredulously, as soon as they were out of earshot. “Like what? The use of energy she sacrifices to send stinging hexes our way?”

Bellatrix laughed, “You know how she is.”

“Fucking impossible?”

“Andy!”

“What? It’s true! Don’t pretend you weren’t thinking the same thing.”

“You shouldn’t use bad language at home. You never know who’s listening around here.”

Andromeda gave her a tight smile as they walked.

“Some of my friends wrote to me this summer.” She said after a few minutes of silence.

“Oh?”

“Yeah.” Andromeda paused. “I think.... I think things are different here than they are for most children.”

Bellatrix felt a sinking feeling in her stomach. “What do you mean.”

“I mean they haven’t ever had their parents use magic on them. Like ever.”

Bellatrix felt anger run through her veins again and spun around grabbing her sister. “You told people about that?!!”

Andromeda’s eyes were wide under her sister’s grip. “No, I didn’t I swear. But Bella. Normal children don’t have to have that reaction to people knowing about anything their parents do. It’s not right in this house. You can feel it can’t you?”

Bellatrix let go of her sister, running a soothing hand down her arm where she had gripped her too tightly. “Sorry didn’t mean to hurt you.”

“S’fine.”

“I know you’re right, but it doesn’t matter. What do you expect us to do? What great change are two girls who don’t even have their trace removed yet do against one of the most powerful wizarding families in the world?”

Andromeda’s eyes flashed with frustration.

“So that’s it you just give up?”

Bellatrix shrugged. “If that’s how you want to put it. Listen Andy, just play their game. Your life becomes so much easier when you do. I know their awful but follow the rules and eventually things will get better.”

Bellatrix looked away from Andromeda’s rapidly reddening eyes.

“I can’t accept that.” Andromeda’s voice quivered.

“You don’t have a choice.”

Andromeda scoffed and walked away. Bellatrix stood still for a few moments before sitting down, back resting against the wall and staring at the portraits on the walls. Decades, centuries even of Blacks lined the walls. The family had a legacy. How many of these people had been children called into their father’s office and crucioed? How many of them had changed something? None judging by the family's reputation. What would make her and her sisters different?

“I’m too ordinary for this.” Bellatrix mumbled tiredly. “I’m not special enough for important changes.”

She pulled her knees up to her chest.

“I just want to be normal.” She whispered, almost as if afraid to speak it into the world. Her secret was safe, she decided, in this dusty hallway. Only the portraits would know that excellence was expected but all she really wanted was to be normal.

Chapter 46 - Shimmering, Beautifull

Andromeda sat stiff and rigid in the train compartment. She had to hand it to Bellatrix she was putting in more effort to make her feel included than last year. It just made Andromeda feel worse though. She clearly didn't belong with these girls. They were their own friend group and Andromeda knew she was just the little sister hanging around.

"I'll be back in a minute." She muttered to Bellatrix, leaving the compartment and ignoring her sister's questioning look.

She wandered through the corridors of the train for a few minutes, trying to ignore the lurch of her stomach at the motion. Just as she had resolved to return to her seat and suffer the feeling of being unwelcome, she heard her name being called out.

"Andromeda!" There was a compartment with someone waving their hand out of it. Andromeda walked over and opened the door all the way. Jones, Vance, and Tonks were all smiling at her from where they sat. She noticed immediately that there was a far more relaxed and peaceful atmosphere in this compartment than the one she had previously been inhabiting. Their trunks were placed haphazardly above the benches and there were sweets lying about. Vance was lying down on one side of the compartment and tilted her head up to grin at Andromeda.

"Andy, how was your summer."

Andromeda gave her a small smile and tried to appear confident while responding

"Good, yeah." She hastily pulled her hand away from where she had nervously been rubbing her arm.

"What did you guys need?"

Ted cocked his head at her, clearly confused. "We wanted you to sit with us."

"Oh! I would but...I mean yeah okay."

His warm eyes crinkled as she agreed.

“Great, Em stop lazing about so Andy can sit there too.”

Emmeline groaned slowly pulling herself off of the cushions.

“I’m really sorry. I didn’t mean to make you move.” Andromeda mumbled, face red.

Emmeline laughed at her. “That’s fine Andy. It was my idea for you to sit with us anyways. If you hadn’t walked past one of us was going to look for you.”

Andromeda felt the corners of her mouth twitch up.

“Oh. Thank you that’s very nice.”

Just as Andromeda sat down the glass door slid open again and Bellatrix walked in with Rita close behind.

“Andy? Did you get lost? What are you doing here?”

Andromeda flushed and stared down at her hands. “It’s fine Bella, I’m gonna stay her for the ride.”

She felt a twinge of guilt as she watched her sister’s face fall for a moment before it went blank.

“I see. Enjoy your Hufflepuffs” She snapped before grabbing Rita’s hand and dragging her away. Andromeda frowned, crossing her arms as she slumped further into the seat. Everyone was staring.

“Sorry about that.” she offered. That seemed to be enough to startle everyone else back into behaving normally.

“Bellatrix”

“Bellatrix!”

“Trix!”

“What?” Bellatrix snapped, turning around and staring at Rita.

“You’re hurting my wrist.” Rita whispered softly.

Bellatrix looked down to where she had yet to release Rita’s wrist. She let go immediately and saw the red marks left by her fingerprints.

“Oh merlin, I’m so sorry Rita.”

Rita looked up through the bangs which she hadn’t cut over the summer. They were covering parts of her glittering eyes.

“Trix it’s fine. It was an accident.”

Bellatrix’s eyebrows furrowed as she remembered again what had made her so frustrated.

“I just... I mean last year she was so mad about me not spending time with her, so I do! And you saw me put in the effort but then she just, just leaves to what? Spend time with some halfblooded Hufflepuff?”

Rita put a hand on Bellatrix’s shoulder rubbing it soothingly.

“I know it’s frustrating but Trix, you have to let her grow up the way she needs to grow up. Maybe those Hufflepuffs make her more comfortable. Maybe she wants her own friends not just to piggyback off of yours.”

Bellatrix’s lips twitched into a scold for a moment, but she nodded firmly.

“Yeah, you’re right. I’m sorry.”

Rita bumped her hip against Bellatrix’s as they walked.

“Don’t apologize to me. Talk to her later.”

“I will.” Bellatrix agreed, giving her a small smile.

They wandered slowly back to the compartment, until Rita pushed Bellatrix into an empty one grinning.

“What the hell Rita?” Bellatrix muttered, turning to glare at the other girl, except that there was no Rita to glare at. Bellatrix went to walk out of the compartment and look for her, but a large green beetle flew in front of her, flying close to her eyes. Bellatrix attempted to bat it away, but it was persistent in flying around her head.

Finally, it decided to leave Bellatrix alone and she went to leave only to hear Rita laughing behind her.

“Where were you?” Bellatrix asked incredulously.

Rita's eyes glittered again as she grabbed Bellatrix’s hand. Bellatrix started as suddenly; Rita disappeared. She panicked for a moment before looking down and realizing the green beetle was in her hand again. Bellatrix stared in awe for a moment and the bug in her hands, green and glittering the same way Rita’s eyes did when she was being mischievous.

“Holy shit.” Bellatrix whispered. “You did it.”

“You...you’re an Animagus. You became an Animagus. You’re thirteen Rita! I mean, this is insane.”

The bug Rita flew out of her hand and then was standing as Rita again, smiling up at her.

“Impressive, huh?”

Bellatrix ran a hand through her hair, still in shock.

“Pretty impressive? It’s fucking incredible.”

Rita grinned at her again. Then shrugged. “It is pretty cool. Think of all the gossip I’ll overhear.”

Bellatrix laughed at her. “you’re impossible. You just became an illegal Animagus, and your first reaction is to think about the gossip you’ll hear.”

Rita grabbed Bellatrix by the hand and started walking to the compartment again.

“Don’t tell anyone, okay?”

“Course not.”

“Great, it’ll be our little secret.”

Chapter 47 - Up the Staircase

Chapter Notes

> as per usual I apologize for the spontaneous updates. There isn't even a shadow of a update schedule because I am an impulsive and flighty creature. I hope you enjoy the story regardless.

The stuffy air in the tower of the divination tower was ruining Bellatrix's life. No, she wasn't being dramatic thank you very much. It had been an unusually warm September so far and the cooling charms proved to be rather ineffective this high up in the classroom. So now Bellatrix had to sit through divination, which was quickly becoming one of her least favorite subjects, and she had to sit in this stuffy classroom. It was that dry heat that you couldn't escape. She absentmindedly pulled at some of the curls tumbling down her shoulders and mentally sighed at how frizzy they would be come. Rita was talking but Bellatrix was ignoring her, partly because Rita had been the giver of a never-ending stream of chatter since breakfast, and partly because she didn't particularly care what tea leaves said about her future.

She was snapped out of her reverie, literally, by Rita moments later.

"What do you think it is?" Rita asked, rolling her eyes. Bellatrix had the feeling the question had already been asked a few times. So, to save herself from the blonde's fury, she leaned over and peered into the teacup.

"A knife maybe?"

Rita winced. "Ooh bad luck then."

Bellatrix laughed. "Oh no whatever will I do."

Rita returned her deadpan look with one of her own.

"You should take this more seriously.

"Fine. What bad luck is going to befall me?"

Rita thumbed through the pages of her divination book for a few moments.

“Disaster, achieved through fighting and hatred.”

Bellatrix’s teasing looks dissipated. It’s not like she believed in any of this stuff. She didn’t. It was just concerningly like the way many of her family members had met their demise. She couldn’t' help but be concerned about a prediction laced with truth.

“Relax Trix. I thought you didn’t even believe in this stuff.”

“I don’t” Bellatrix hissed, grabbing Rita’s cup and staring at it stubbornly.

“It’s a mushroom or a hat.” Bellatrix said, squinting while rotating the cup in her hands.

Rita raised her eyebrows skeptically, “Those two things aren't very similar.”

“Am I reading the tea leaves, or are you?” Bellatrix shot back.

Rita raised her hands in surrender, “Okay, sorry. Enlighten me great seer as to what my mushroom/hat tea leaves mean for my future.”

Bellatrix opened her own book with a scowl and scanned the page quickly.

“Okay so you either have great success in life, maybe your journalling career. Or you will separate from a lover after a fight.”

Rita laughed. “Right, well seeing as I haven’t currently taken up a lover, I suppose the next edition of the rumor mill will do well. Maybe taking it in a political direction will be a good thing.”

Bellatrix gave her a twitch of her lips in response.

“Maybe.”

Class dismissed a long half hour later and both girls traipsed down the stairs of the tower, eager to get back to the common room. Right as they reached the last stair from the long winding staircase out the tower, Bellatrix reached down to check her bag for the divination homework and realized it was not there.

She threw back her head in frustration and groaned.

“What’s wrong?” Rita asked, blue eyes widened in alarm.

“Forgot my divination stuff. I’m gonna must walk up all these bloody steps again.”

Rita’s eyes twinkled in that malicious way they so often did.

“That’s rough.” she said, in a disturbingly sympathetic tone. “See you later!”

She offered cheerily, waving her fingers as she walked away not bothering to look back.

Bellatrix rolled her eyes as the flighty blonde retreated, then resigned herself to trudging back up the winding steps of the tower. As she walked up the stairs, she felt her lungs begin to tighten as she got higher and higher. At first, she assumed it was physical exertion but as she continued smoke began to gather in the air. Mildly concerned that she was walking into a fire, she pulled out her wand as she rounded the corner. She raised her eyebrows briefly before settling her face into a neutral position at the sight of two fifth years smoking in front of the divination classroom.

The blonde on the right, looked slightly remorseful about smoking in front of a classroom. But the other blonde girl, who was slightly taller and had red painted lips, didn’t appear to have any qualms and simply raised an eyebrow at Bellatrix.

“Just grabbing a textbook, I left in there.” Bellatrix said coolly.

The girl who had looked ashamed at first went to move out of the way but the other one put a hand across her, stopping the movement.

“How old are you?” she asked, staring Bellatrix down.

“Thirteen.”

The older girl appraised her another moment blue eyes flitting up and down Bellatrix and making her break eye contact, but then the girl shrugged reaching into her pocket and pulling out a red box. Opening it up she held the case open.

“Want one?”

Bellatrix stared up at the other girl. No, she didn’t really think mother would approve of her smoking cigarettes. It’s not that she didn’t want to, and the tall older girl seemed more than willing to offer one, but if mother found out... Bellatrix repressed a shudder.

“I’m in a bit of the rush at the moment.” she offered, hoping the excuse would stick. The older girl’s red mouth frowned slightly, and Bellatrix hurriedly offered up “maybe another time?”

The corners of the girl's lips twitched upwards. “Yes, maybe next time.” she said, smile hidden in her voice.

Bellatrix grabbed her textbook hastily, hoping to avoid any more older students heading up for their lesson. She left the two girls still lingering outside the door and set off down the stairs at a hurried pace, pondering the strange events with curiosity.

Chapter 48 - Summer Sun For You Forever

Chapter Notes

here's another chapter for you lovelies (remember what i said about those irregular update schedules) Check out my new quillkiller fic as well if you have a second

Here's the playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=34709a1cbb3e4af6

Andromeda had been grateful, at first, for the opportunity to partner up with Tonks for herbology. He was so much better at it than her and because he was a Hufflepuff like the new teacher, he often received the tiniest bit of favoritism. At first, she had been glad, until the cheery short teacher had announced that they would all need to grab some cotton ball to put into their ears. Andromeda had been confused at first, walking slowly up to the front of the greenhouse with the rest of the students and grabbing some soft cotton balls from the students. She placed them in her ears firmly and then jumped in shock as Sprout pulled at one of the leafy greens sitting in the planter beds. The leafy greens were attached to a brown wrinkly screaming baby.

She had shared a confused look with Tonks which quickly grew into alarm at the faint sounds of shrieking growing louder and louder almost piercing through the cotton, which Andromeda pushed more firmly into her ear hastily. Sprout’s mouth was moving but she must have realized that the shrieking of what Andromeda had assumed must be a wrinkly baby, had distracted most students. Andromeda watched as Sprout re-planted the screeching plant and sighed in relief as the sound dissipated.

She pulled the cotton out of her ear and fixed the teacher with a glare. What had even been the point of that lesson. Oh yes let me make a great impression as a new teacher by deafening half of Hogwarts's second years. Brilliant idea! Andromeda fixed the teacher with a glare.

She was young, at least by Hogwarts’ standards, for a professor. If Andromeda had to guess she’d say maybe forty years old. The biggest issue with this new teacher was that she was so clearly inexperienced, and letting an inexperienced teacher start teaching with a bunch of twelve-year-old was like throwing someone with a bleeding wound into a pit of piranhas.

“Does anyone know what the plant I just unearthed is called?” Questioned Sprout, clearly desperate to gain control of the class, which Andromeda noticed with amusement was growing louder and louder in volume.

“Anyone at all?” she asked again, sounding a bit more desperate than the time before.

To Andromeda’s surprise Tonks shot his hand up beside her.

“Is it a mandrake plant miss?”

The stout woman flushed with delight at what Andromeda could only assume was the correct answer.

“Very good Mr?”

“Tonks.” He replied, giving the teacher a sunny smile. Andromeda rolled her eyes.

“And can anyone tell me why the Mandrake plant is dangerous?”

“Maybe because it’s going to blow out all of our ear drums.” Andromeda muttered sullenly, still rather displeased at the lack of warning about the shrieks of the plant. Unfortunately, the new professor seemed to have heard her grumbling.

“Sorry could you speak up dear?”

Andromeda knew a flush was visible on her pale face as she responded, “Maybe because it’s going to blow out our eardrums.” Unable to meet the teacher's eye.

Sprout just laughed genially, either oblivious or uncaring towards Andromeda’s insolence. “Rather worse in fact Miss Black. The unfiltered cry of a fully grown mandrake is fatal to humans.”

Every single student in the small greenhouse retreated quickly from the garden bed where the Mandrakes were planted. Sprout laughed.

“Not to worry, not to worry. They are just babies right now. Removing the cotton would not be advisable once they are unearthed, but you will not die I promise.”

The students all stared at her warily.

“Alright, Alright, why don’t we go outside to discuss the life cycle of the Mandrakes.”

Andromeda grinned. Though it was now almost the end of September the days were still as warm as they had been in August and Andromeda was looking forward to enjoying the warm weather for as long as physically possible. Her distaste for the cold dampness supplied by the Slytherin common room had not dissipated over the summer.

Twenty minutes later after listening to Sprout’s small lecture Andromeda sat on the grass next to Tonks who was reading off the life cycle to her as she sketched out some drawings for their project. Tonks reached to fix something on the parchment and Andromeda swatted his hand away.

“I’ve got it.” She said, eyes not leaving the parchment. She enjoyed the quiet of drawing for assignments like these. The soothing activity of silent perfectionism. Making sure every trait of the specimen was obvious and drawn properly.

“Just trying to help.” Said Ted, frowning no doubt at Andromeda’s temperament.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to snap at you.”

Ted gave her one of those quizzical looks. “No, you did. But it’s okay. I shouldn’t have touched what you were working on.”

Andromeda blinked at him slowly. “Right, okay. It’s fine.” She looked around quickly to see that most students were packing their things up now.

“I should probably head back down to the dungeons.”

Ted gave her a sympathetic smile. “Sorry. I know you hate them.”

Andromeda sighed, standing up and dusting the grass off of her skirt.

“It’s more complicated than that.”

Ted shrugged. “Maybe.”

Andromeda smiled at him, tilting her head. “Maybe?”

“Yeah, maybe it’s complicated or maybe it’s not. Sometimes you just feel what you feel. And I think you hate the Slytherin common room. Doesn’t mean you hate your house; it just means you hate cold damp dungeons.”

Andromeda laughed. “I suppose you're right. See you later Tonks.” She said, offering him a small smile as they parted ways nearing the castle.”

He waved at her and before she turned away, graced her with another one of those sunny grins.

Chapter 49 - Lyrical Smile, Indigo Eyes

The wet gravel crunched beneath the feet of the third years as they eagerly followed McGonagall to the gates of the Hogwarts grounds.

“Please orderly get in a line with your permission slips ready for me to examine.” She called out, stern Scottish accent cutting through the exited chatter of the students.”

Bellatrix stood next to Rita, with a permission slip and list of items she needed clutched in one gloved hand. Rita stomped one foot and blew hot air onto her hands.

“So much for nice weather.” She muttered, “I’m freezing.”

“Should’ve brought a cloak.” Bellatrix teased, rolling her eyes at her friend's dramatics.

Rita stared over at her with those big blue eyes, eyebrows lifted beseechingly. Bellatrix huffed, a puff of cold air rising in front of her as she unclasped her own cloak and handed it over.

“You’re lucky I brought a cloak and a jumper.” she said, refusing to look at Rita, knowing she would have a self-satisfied look on. Bellatrix rubbed her gloved hands together to warm them as the line slowly moved forwards.

Finally, both girls were at the front of the line and Bellatrix thrust her permission slip into the old woman’s hands.

McGonagall pursed her lips but said nothing as she scanned the slip.

“Everything appears to be in order Ms. Black. You may go ahead and enjoy your time in the village.”

“Thanks.” Bellatrix said, staring at Rita expectantly. Rita flushed and patted the pockets of the cloak.

“I’m so sorry ma’am, I must have lost my slip somewhere in the line. Could you let me in? I promise I had it.”

McGonagall’s thin lips frowned, and she patted Rita’s shoulder somewhat stiffly.

“Sorry dear but I can’t let students through without one. Write to your parents and have them send another one. Then you can go next term.”

Rita's lip quivered as Bellatrix stared at her unimpressed.

"I'll walk Rita back to the doors professor." She offered quickly, grabbing Rita's arm and walking away.

As soon as they were out of eyesight Bellatrix spun around and stared Rita down.

"You never had a permission slip, did you?"

Rita's lips quirked for a moment. "You know me so well."

Bellatrix rolled her eyes. "Of course, I do, that's beside the point. Why didn't you get one?"

Rita scoffed. "Stupid parents, not impressed with my marks or something."

Bellatrix frowned. "I could've helped you."

Rita shrugged, avoiding the other girl's eyes. "I didn't want to be a trouble."

Bellatrix smacked the other girl playfully. "Don't be stupid. I like you regardless of how troublesome you are."

Rita gave her a sparkling smile. "Okay, help me with my charms homework then."

Bellatrix nodded reassuringly, "Of course. For now, why don't you transform, and I'll walk you into the village."

Bellatrix looped the gold button of her cloak through as she walked past McGonagall for the second time that day.

"Did Ms. Skeeter get back to her dorm?" the professor inquired as Bellatrix walked past.

"Yes, I believe she's writing to her parents for another slip at the moment."

McGonagall nodded and waved Bellatrix past the gates in dismissal.

Bellatrix grinned, reaching her gloved fingers into the pocket of the cloak and feeling a flutter of wings.

As soon as she got to the village, she ignored the excitement of having some more freedom outside of Hogwarts and scanned the buildings for a private place to let Rita transform without being seen. The back alley of the Hog's Head looked as good as any.

She scanned the grimy alley behind the stone building warily then pulled Rita out of her pocket, smiling at the flutter of wings and then batting Rita away as she began to buzz around her head.

"You know I hate that." She snapped, "Change back or I'll squash you."

Rita transformed, laughing teasingly. "You know you can't squash me. I still have the resilience of a human even in Animagus form."

"Yes, well it still got you to stop bothering me didn't it."

Rita was about to quip back with what Bellatrix didn't doubt was a sharp retort when they heard muffled voices coming around the corner.

Rita yanked Bellatrix behind a pile of old barrels hastily. Bellatrix stared down at where Rita's hand grabbed her wrist, seemingly entranced by the way her warm fingers made Bellatrix's cold pale skin, causing it to flush red.

"Trix!" Rita hissed, "What's wrong with you? Pay attention." She continued pointing through a gap in one of the barrels to what looked like two fourth years having a hushed conversation.

"I'm gonna transform and see if I can overhear them."

Bellatrix turned; eyes widened "Be careful!" She tried to caution the other girl.

Bellatrix strained her ears to hear the hushed conversation but couldn't pick up on anything. She decided her time would be best spent sitting and sulking quietly while she waited for Rita to reappear. Five minutes later a beetle landed on her shoulder and Rita transformed next to her.

"That was Jody Jackknife." She whispered excitedly, blue eyes glittering dangerously. "And she was talking to the Hufflepuff quidditch captain Armstrong Boot." She paused for what Bellatrix could only assume was dramatic effect. "The muggle born."

Bellatrix laughed. "Oh, I see. New edition?"

Rita nodded firmly. "New edition. Back to basics I think, drawing headlines and pamphlets from the ceiling. The professors won't be expecting it twice."

"Transform then." Bellatrix urged her, "I'll get the supplies we need from Scrivenshafts and then we can get started."

An hour later they were lying on the floor of their dorm next to Zabini, who was drawing out an image of Jody and Armstrong at the quidditch game that had happened that Friday. Rita was scribbling away, and Bellatrix was coaching her.

“Remember to not come across too strong in your descriptions about him being a mudblood. You don’t want them to think you want them to think it's wrong, you want them to subconsciously agree with you.”

Rita nodded chewing thoughtfully at her quill. Bellatrix stared, probably just upset that Rita was ruining the quill she had bought not an hour before.

“Okay I think it’s ready.”

The girls had sat eagerly in their seats the next morning. Alecto sat and the end of the table where Bellatrix stared at her watching for her to give the signal to her brother at the Ravenclaw table. She saw the red-haired girl nod twice and looked up grinning to see the papers fall from the ceiling once again.

She grinned at Rita as they felt the rise of student chatter around them and the indignant voices of the teachers. The cacophony of noise and pamphlets floating everywhere was unimportant to Bellatrix. What was more important was the way Rita was smiling, glittering eyes darting around the room, reveling in the chaos she had caused. If something as easy as this made Rita happy, Bellatrix was determined to do it forever.

Chapter 50 - My Tomb Of Silence

Chapter Notes

> chapter 50?!?!?! can't believe we've come this far. Like that's actually crazy. If you've stayed with it this far thanks and ily <3

Dumbledore being angry was a bit of an understatement in Andromeda's opinion. Most people had thought that he had reacted very stoically to the situation, but she knew better. Years of living with a family that guarded their emotions carefully behind closed off faces had taught her better. She saw the way his eyes flashed in frustration, anger, and possible desperation. No, she hadn't been surprised Dumbledore was angry just like she hadn't been surprised that Bellatrix had been behind it.

She had hoped that her sister would give up on the rumor mill. Bellatrix couldn't see the harm it was going to cause because she was blinded by the excitement Rita's friendship gave her. Andromeda could see it. The way Bellatrix had a different grin when the other girl was present. The way she laughed so loudly at the other girl's jokes. That kind of friendship was a rush Andromeda was sure. But it was causing Bellatrix harm, blinding her to what was important.

So of course, she had been disappointed when pages had come falling from the ceiling of the great hall once again. Disappointed, but not surprised. She had stared dejectedly at the pamphlet that had fallen directly into the porridge she had been about to eat. She had glared at Rita from the other side of the table. They had made eye contact briefly before Rita blinked her cat-like eyes away from Bellatrix for a moment and locked eyes with Andromeda. Both girls had held eye contact for a moment, Rita holding Andromeda's fierce gaze. Then, Rita blinked slowly before captivating Bellatrix's attention once again.

Andromeda had gotten up abruptly from the table, mood soured once again by Rita Skeeter. What infuriated her most about the other girl wasn't the teasing words or clever barbs. It was the way she knew she didn't have to do those things to win. All she had to do was ask and Bellatrix's attention was hers. Andromeda was competing in a losing race and they both knew it.

She had meant to go to her usual alcove but had found it too busy with stragglers from the Ravenclaw tower heading down to Breakfast. Instead of going back to her dorm and finishing the work she had there, she decided to roam until she could find a nice place to finish the three feet she had to turn in for potions later that day. Anytime she tried to work in her dorm if she could get past the horrible dorm mates, she often found the dim lighting made it difficult to write anything neatly anyways. The half-finished essay was already in her bag, so she figured it was probably the best to try and find a nice cozy place.

She found herself wandering further than she usually did and was quite pleased when she found herself in the quiet peace of the seventh floor. She had only been up her a handful of times, because while it wasn't restricted, students who weren't headed to the Gryffindor common room weren't really encouraged to be here. She quickly paced past the fat lady who she knew guarded the Gryffindor common room and found the hallways to be nice and peaceful.

Once she reached the end of a slightly gloomy corridor she decided to turn back and examine it for any alcoves she might be able to fit into and study in. She walked down the hallway and back up again and sighed at her lack of luck. Just as she went to head back down to the Slytherin dorm she startled at the sight of a classroom door she hadn't seen before. Hesitantly she pushed it open and felt her face settle into a smile at the room inside.

It wasn't really a classroom, though it looked like it had been at one point. It looked like over the years different students had been coming here to study judging from the old books and parchments scattered about the few desks left in the room. She was certain desks used to be more plentiful but now there were now soft and plushy cushions to sit on in most areas of the floor. There was a fireplace crackling and the flame's shadows flickered on the warm yellow walls, highlighting tall dark bookshelves full of dusty old books.

She sat eagerly on one of the cushions sighing at how comfortable it was and feeling quite pleased with her discovery only wishing she could have some sort of hard surface to work on her essay with. She scanned the room quickly searching for some sort of hard surface and was even more pleased with the room when she saw exactly what she needed leaning against one of the walls.

"This is perfect." She had whispered in disbelief to herself. Secretly she hoped finding somewhere nice to study would help her finally get her marks up. She began to scratch away at the essay, smiling widely as the words came easy. She finished in a record amount of time and up her essay humming to herself and feeling significantly more hopeful than she ever remembered feeling, at least not since she had come to Hogwarts. She left the room, jotting down the location quickly before heading back down the corridor to go to potions.

Heading back down the main stairs of the castle she resolved herself not to worry so much about Rita and Bellatrix's friendship. Eventually Bellatrix would see what Rita was doing and then Bellatrix would draw back immediately. She knew her sister and had faith in her. Everything was finally looking up.

Chapter 51 - Casually Cruel

Bellatrix sat in the history of magic considering the possibility of this being the most awful history of magic class to ever exist. She was first of all, exhausted by the sound of Professor Binns droning voice going on and on about witch hunts she'd known about since she was five. Really why did the pureblood pupils have to suffer because of the lack of knowledge from the other people the school took in? She rolled her eyes and repressed the urge to slump her head into the crook of her elbow and have a nap on the desk.

To make matters worse she found herself stuck, not next to Rita like she normally was but instead Gilderoy Lockhart. This boy was perhaps the most pretentious git she had ever had the displeasure of knowing. In an effort for interhouse unity they had been asked to sit with a Ravenclaw instead of their usual Slythering partners and she had found herself lucky enough to be partnered with him.

Finally, the Professor announced that class was over. Bellatrix's eyes snapped to attention at that, and she quickly began packing her supplies into her bag. Quickly she walked over to the table where Rita was sitting with a partner she looked just as displeased with. Both girls were making a beeline for the door when the Professor called out

"Just a reminder that the history of witch hunts and their futility needs to be submitted by next week. All work must be done in collaboration with your partner."

Bellatrix audibly groaned and then slapped a hand over her mouth to stifle the sound as Lockhart walked over.

"Looks like we will be working together." He said, giving her a grin and flashing teeth that were so white Bellatrix thought she might be momentarily blinded.

"Don't you worry your pretty little head about it thought." He said voice patronizing as he patted Bellatrix's hair. Bellatrix grabbed his hand as it left her head and twisted it around so that his arm was locked. She places one hand firmly on his locked elbow as he winced.

"Don't touch me." Bellatrix hissed through gritted teeth, ignoring Rita who was clearly shocked.

"Okay, okay, okay," Lockhart whined out, "Let me go!"

Bellatrix released his arm, and he tripped forward, rubbing his arm and wincing pathetically.

“Crazy bitch.” he muttered, just as Professor Binns floated over.

“Is there a problem here?” he asked, in a tone that made it clear he hoped there wasn’t because he wasn’t going to deal with it. Bellatrix stared at the boy who was still wincing down with a menacing sneer.

“No Professor, Lockhart and I were just having a little discussion about the direction we wanted to take with our project.”

She blinked slowly, staring Lockhart down before continuing. “Isn’t that right Lockhart?”

Lockhart scowled at her and ran his fingers through his dark brown hair.

“Nope, no problem here professor.”

Binns floated away and Lockart glared at Bellatrix once again. Before he could speak Bellatrix cut him off.

“Listen to me clearly because I’m going to say this once. I am going to make sure the outlines of the project are correct. I will give you a parchment outlining what portions I need you to write paragraphs for, which I will consolidate into the main project. That is all I need from you.”

Lockhart put on his sparkling smile again, albeit a little more shaken than before then said “Perfect, I’m glad you see it my way. I’m glad we’ve come to an arrangement.”

“My arrangement.” Bellatrix hissed before marching out of the classroom with Rita close behind.

“A bit vicious there.” Rita called out as she ran to catch up.

“He deserves it, trust me.”

“Well I never said it was uncalled for.” Rita said, laughing. “Come on let’s go to lunch.”

Bellatrix frowned, considering for a moment before deciding against it. “I can’t, I have too much work to get done.”

Rita rolled her eyes. “You behave like we’re in fifth year. Come with me, we are going to lunch. I promise you your work will still be there when you are finished eating.”

Bellatrix did think about protesting but, when Rita set her mind to something it was easier to just give her what she wanted.

“Fine.” She mumbled, Allowing Rita to intertwine their fingers and pull Bellatrix to the great hall.

They sat down and Rita began to eat while Bellatrix picked away at her own food.

“What’s wrong?” Rita asked, brows furrowed in concern.

Bellatrix gave her a quick smile. “Nothing, promise. I’m just thinking about what work I have due today.”

Rita rolled her eyes. “You worry too much.”

Bellatrix shook her head. “You don’t get it. My parents made me sign up for every course they deemed useful for my future. That’s why I’m in the dorms later most nights. I have private tutoring for some of the courses at night, because the ministry didn’t approve me for a time turner. It is like fifth year for me.”

Rita places a hand on Bellatrix back sympathetically. “I’m sorry your parents are so hard on you. I promise you I’m proud of you, and you are working really hard. I’m sure the Professor's see that and understand. I believe in you.”

Bellatrix looked over at the other girl and gave her a small smile, “Thank you Rita.”

Chapter 52 - But it's golden

Chapter Notes

> Hey lovely humans! if you follow my other socials you know I took a bit of a break last week due to some mental health stuff hence the lack of updates, but I'm back now! Hope you enjoy the chapter and thanks for sticking with it. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

At first the discovery of the room had been so exciting Andromeda had wanted to share it with her sister immediately. However, after letting herself sleep on it, she ended up deciding against it. She shared her whole life with Bellatrix and Bellatrix would probably just end up using the room to make more copies of the rumor mill under the professor's noses. Then that Skeeter girl would be brought into the room as well and there would go her newly discovered sanity.

She had to think a little bit longer about whether or not to tell Tonks and the others. They were friends maybe, but could they be trusted? She wasn't sure, wasn't even sure if she wanted to find out. She had always wanted a group of friends, but they all seemed to be so close knit. They knew each other inside and out and she often felt like she was intruding on the calm easiness that they so quickly fell into around each other. And really, why should she continue to burden them with her presence when they probably just felt sorry for her.

She had resolved to keep her distance from the Hufflepuffs. After coming to the conclusion that they just felt sorry for her it had been so easy to see the signs. The train rides, the late-night conversations, the help with her magic. It was all because they felt sorry for her, and she had been too selfish to realize the burden she had been placing on these people who were just trying to do a nice thing. Perhaps it had made her a bit lonelier than before but on the plus side her marks had done much better. So much better in fact that she had received a letter from her parents (or rather her parents house elf) about her improvement. She had smugly showed the letter to Bellatrix and could have sworn she saw her sister's eye twitch.

Now she was headed back to the room, her satchel filled to the brim with parchment and books she knew she would need for her studying that evening. As she turned a corner, she froze eyes wide as she saw the Hufflepuff's laughing together. She hadn't realized how close she was to their common room and now felt a small twinge of sadness as she watched them laugh together as they walked down the hallway without a care in the world.

She tried to console herself, she knew they had only talked to her because they were sorry for her and now, she had her proof. They weren't missing her at all, in fact it was like she'd never been there in the first place. The twinge of pain was quickly fading and in its place grew that familiar twisting feeling of rage she was so used to seeing from her family.

She held her chin pointed high as she stormed past the group. She had begun with staring them down, with fury she could feel burning through her eyes, but as Hestia Jones had made eye contact, she had felt a flush rise to her cheeks and quickly averted her eyes. She had almost made it past the group when Tonks called out, causing her to freeze up and slowly freeze around.

"Andromeda!" He called out again, his face stuck in what Andromeda wondered quickly to herself might be a permanent smile.

"How have you been?" He said, getting closer. She felt panic rising in her chest and took a small step back.

"Good yeah, I've just been so busy revising. I'm sure you know how it is."

Tonks frowned. "I had kind of hoped you'd want to be revising again with us this year."

Andromeda felt her face drop into a scowl against her will. "You don't have to do that."

She almost wanted to roll her eyes at the bewildered look on Tonks face.

"Do what?" he asked, cocking his head to the side quizzically.

"I figured it out, and it's fine I appreciate what you guys are doing but you don't have to pretend to be friends with me to help me or something. I'm fine, and I can handle myself."

She heard a scoff from the group behind Tonks and peered over his shoulder to see Jones walking towards them.

"Are you that dense? Merlin, I thought your family was supposed to be smart."

Andromeda flushed even darker at that comment if that was even possible. She was just about to turn around and leave when Jones grabbed her hand. Andromeda quickly snatched it back but stared at the girl expectantly.

"Andromeda, we ask you to spend time with us because we like you. Not because we feel sorry for you. And if I'm being frank you need to lower your opinion of yourself if you think a friend group would drop their whole social life to spend time with you out of pity. Your fun and you're our friend. So, stop avoiding us and stop being stupid."

Andromeda was lost for words for a moment before stammering out.

"I see. Thank you, I... I didn't realize." She turned her gaze from Jones and stared and Tonks for a moment only to look away quickly, hating that look he gave her so often. The one where

he was trying to figure her out, she could see it in the way his eyebrows lifted, and his lips parted slightly. And she didn't like it. She didn't want people to figure her out. She turned her gaze quickly to the others.

Jones slung her arm over Andromeda's shoulder causing her to scowl, but she decided against throwing the other girl's arm off.

"So, Andy, since you've abandoned us for so long, I reckon you can make it up by spending some time with us right now."

Andromeda opened her mouth about to protest but was cut off quickly by Emmeline Vance who had come up beside Andromeda.

"Nope, you are not allowed to argue miss. Have you ever seen the Hufflepuff common room?"

"Er... no? We aren't supposed to go to other houses common rooms."

Vance rolled her eyes. "That's a fake rule. C'mon you have no choice."

Andromeda gave a bit of a show of rolling her eyes and sighing but inwardly smiled at the warmth of acceptance from the people now pulling her towards a painting of some pears. She wondered if this was the calm easy feeling, they always felt being around each other and hoped to Merlin it was.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you loved it! Andy and her friendship insecurities are so special and important to me. My baby just needs to know she's loved :(but that's why the hufflepuffs are so good for her because they are not letting her ass run and hide anywhere.

Chapter 53 - Why Am I Still Writing Pages?

Chapter Notes

Hey! Hope you enjoy, here's the spotify playlist.
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0bF5eocNMJlqfGIRpfJkai?si=e601309cec8544b5

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"The Salem witch trials didn't actually happen, that was a myth."

Bellatrix held back the urge to repeatedly smack her head against the table. Lockhart was reading the first draft of the essay she had prepared and so far, every single suggestion he had made was either incredibly stupid or just completely wrong.

"What is your proof that the Salem witch trials, an incredibly famous part of the history of magic, never happened." Bellatrix said, with only her years of social training saving her from snapping at him.

Lockhart scoffed and ran his fingers through his irritatingly perfect hair.

"It's a myth made up to make us frightened of muggles when we are obviously superior."

Bellatrix rolled her eyes. "We are superior to muggles, we proved that during the Salem witch trial by surviving."

"Maybe, if those trials had ever actually happened." Lockhart muttered.

"Why are you even here?" She snapped, unintentionally.

"I just want to make sure you aren't going to muck up the entire project and ruin my perfect grade."

Bellatrix snatched the essay back from the pompous boy from across the table.

"I have the highest marks in the year, what are you talking about?"

Lockhart shrugged, seemingly unperturbed by her aggressiveness. "That's up for debate."

Bellatrix threw her arms up in the air. "It's not. The professors have given me the highest marks so I'm best in the year."

“Whatever you say.” he said, using the same condescending tone of voice as the day before. She ignored him, rolling the essay up aggressively and storming away.

“Woah Trix slow down!” Rita called out, getting up from the chair she had been reading in, and rushing towards the other girl.

Bellatrix continued to storm out of the library ignoring Rita and her annoying nicknames. She stared straight ahead, face impassive. She could feel the anger running through her veins now as her brain began to play the conversation over and over again.

“Who does he think he is?” She muttered to herself through gritted teeth.

“Who?” Rita said, breathless from trying to keep up with Bellatrix’s relentless pace.

Bellatrix turned to look at her as she muttered. “Lockhart.”

Rita’s confusion immediately changed to understanding as she heard the name.

“I see.”

“If he’s not trying to take credit for my work, he’s trying to tell me everything I do is wrong. And to top it all off, today he told me he’s top of the year when we both know I am.”

Rita’s lip twitched into a smile for a brief second before she responded. “You’re right he’s awful.”

Bellatrix nodded; lips pursed.

Rita continued. “So, what are you going to do about it?”

“What do you mean?” Bellatrix asked, cocking her head in confusion.

“Don’t let him take credit for your hard work. Prove you’ve done it all.”

“How?” Bellatrix implored.

Rita rolled her eyes. “Follow me.”

Bellatrix allowed Rita to grab her hand and pull her along, in a gesture that was becoming all too familiar and somewhat comforting.

They rushed through the common room and sat on Rita’s bed.

“Okay show me your essay.”

Bellatrix handed over the now crumpled essay. Rita raised an eyebrow at the disrepair it was in.

“Ignore that.” Bellatrix snapped.

Rita scanned the essay quickly, pursing her lips in focus.

“Okay,” She mused, “Do you have any of your other essays on hand at the moment?”

Bellatrix thought for a moment, then walking over to the trunk under her own bed, pulled one out.

“Why do you need it?” She inquired as Rita did a quick copying spell over both.

“Look.” Rita began to explain, as she circled various points in both essays. “I’m highlighting the similarities between so that you can see it’s only your writing style being presented. That should be enough that you can submit the project, and if Lockhart tries to take credit for it you can prove it’s all your work.”

Bellatrix felt her face split into a grin against her own will. “Thanks.” She mumbled awkwardly.

“Don’t mention it.” Rita offered, shrugging her shoulders and avoiding Bellatrix’s eyes.

The next day they all sat in History of Magic, Bellatrix, much to her dismay still being forced to sit with Lockhart.

“Did you remember the essay.” he asked, still continuing to stare her down with that condescending look she had so grown to despise in the last few days.

“Students please bring your essays up to the front.” Droned Professor Binns.

Bellatrix went to get up and bring the essay but was surprised by Lockhart’s hand stalling her movement.

“it’s fine I can bring it. I’ve barely done any work for the project so far anyways, let me give it to him.”

Bellatrix narrowed her eyes at him. Obviously, this was him trying to take credit for the project, but he didn’t know she had already gathered her evidence. So, she gave him a sickening smile and offered up a

“Of course, thanks.”

She watched the boy smugly walk towards the professor and watched them share a few words as she smirked. She waited for all the students to hand their work in before walking up to speak to the professor herself.

“I’m so sorry to bother you Professor Binns. I just thought I should show you this.” She held out the papers Rita had made for her and placed them on the desk. “As you can see Lockhart hasn’t actually been able to do any of the work for the project so far. I don’t mean to get anyone in trouble, but I know the work was meant to be done together. However, he refused to do any and I didn’t want us to get in trouble.”

She looked up at the Professor with a perfectly curated worried look.

“I see. Thank you for your explanation, Ms....er”

“Black.” Bellatrix offered up sweetly.

“Yes, thank you Ms. Black. I will mark the essays with this in mind.”

She walked back to her desk feeling quite pleased with herself and as she sat down next to a seething Lockhart, grinned at Rita and mouthed out a quick “Thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

hope you loved it! I think they're so cute not realizing that they're in love.

Chapter 54 - All I do Is Try Try Try

The Hufflepuff common room hadn't been what Andromeda had been expecting. The general themes were the same yes. Warm yellow and comfortable furniture just like she had been imagining however, she was surprised at the welcoming feeling it gave up.

Unlike the Slytherin common room where everyone kept to themselves, the Hufflepuff's common room seemed to buzz with an undercurrent of conversation. And to Andy's surprise, laughter. The Slytherin common room barely had the sound of conversation running through it let alone laughter. She startled as she realized she hardly heard laughter ever.

She would swear on Merlin's grave that she had never once heard either of her parents laugh and any time they heard her sisters laughing they quickly shut them up. She listened to the sound a moment longer, soaking it in until Tonks nudged her.

"You alright?" He said, voice low enough that the rest of the group wouldn't overhear.

Andromeda gave him what she hoped was a convincing nod. He didn't look convinced. However, he did let them move closer to the rest of the group.

As they approached the rest of the group Andromeda felt a wave of discomfort wash over her yet again. Why couldn't she just be normal? Why couldn't she just hang out with her friends. Speaking of, she gave them a tight smile as they continued walking through the common room.

"Where are we going?" She asked, beginning to feel unsettled as they walked past the larger groups of students and into the dustier and dimmer back parts of the common room. Even though the general aura of the Hufflepuff common room was peaceful, back here was even more quiet. The common room had two levels and being on the lower allowed them an enclosed space, with light seeping down through the floorboards of the upper level.

They all sat on soft cushions in a circle and Andromeda grabbed a spot next to Vance. Jones pulled out a deck of cards and Andromeda leaned over to whisper into Vance's ear.

“What are we doing?”

“Playing a game. She whispered back. Don’t worry, it's easy to pick up.”

As Jones began dealing out cards Ted started explaining.

“Okay so your pile of cards stays face down and you begin to flip through your deck, if you find an ace place it in the middle. Then keep going, if you find an one it goes onto an ace before someone else can place an one there.”

“How do you win?” Andromeda asked, her curiosity piqued.

Tonks smiled at her enthusiasm. “You need to get through your pile first, lift your hands in the air and shout out Merlin. But, be careful Andy, it’s really fast paced.”

Andromeda nodded, staring down at her pile of cards with determination. As soon as Tonks shouted out for them to start she began flipping furiously through her pile of cards and suppressing the victorious feeling growing in her chest at the dwindling stack of cards in front of her. Others were close by about a minute in but she only had a kind left. She watched like a hawk and then… Mouthed a quick thank you to Jones as she placed a queen onto one of the decks. Andromeda slammed the card down and lifted her hands up into the air excitedly shouting out “Merlin! I won!”

Everyone stared up at her in surprise and she felt her pale face begin to flush.

“Sorry, I get a bit competitive.”

They all stared at her with a quizzical look.

“There’s nothing wrong with wanting to win against Andy.” Vance offered up kindly, then she patted the cushion Andromeda had been sitting on. “Come on, let's play again.”

An hour later Andromeda grimaced as she cast a tempus.

“I’m sorry but I really do have to go. My common room is a bit of a walk and I don’t want to get caught out before curfew.”

The others nodded, although she was pleased too see they looked disappointed.

“See you around!” She offered hopefully, as she stood up and brushed off her robes, making her way through the common room and out into the chilly corridors.

She hummed lightly to herself as she walked leisurely back to her own common room. Not particularly eager to get back to her own rude roommates, she was happy to settle for a couple drafty corridors and an odd dripping sound coming from one of the abandoned dungeons. She finally made her way back to the Slytherin common room only to cringe at the intense difference it held from the one she had just been in.

She cringed even deeper when she turned her head and was greeted by her sister.

“Bella! Your still up?”

“So are you.” Bellatrix responded, voice deadpan.

“I was studying.” Andromeda offered, faking a yawn quickly.

“In the Hufflepuff common room?”

Andromeda felt her stomach sink, beginning to twist itself in knots.

“It was just a study group, Bella, don’t tell mother and father.”

Bella frowned, “I won’t but please, be cautious of who you’re hanging around. There’s hardly any purebloods in Hufflepuff at all.”

Andromeda nodded fervently and rushed to her own room. She got into bed and drew the emerald curtains around herself quickly. Her heart was rushing at the idea of the trouble she could've been in. She had to be more careful who saw her. Bella may be happy to keep her secret but there were others who wouldn't.

Chapter 55 - In The Middle Of The Night

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bellatrix's dreams that night had been fitful to say the least. She had tossed and turned with worry as she saw scene after scene of her mother and father, looming over her tall and ominous. Moment after moment of warning, punishment, disappointment, and pain. She had woken several times in the night with a panicked pulse and shaky breath.

Every time she had woken up she had been grateful for the thick green curtains, walling herself off from her dormmates. How do you explain to a group of thirteen year old girls that you can't sleep properly at night because mummy dearest isn't the sweetest person in the world?

She lay back down after waking up for maybe the third time that night, eyes wide and any promise of sleep lost. It was Andromeda, she decided. Running around with Hufflepuffs. What was she thinking? She was going too get them all in trouble the second their parents got wind of it. And Andromeda may be naive, but she wasn't. They were going to get wind of it one day, no matter what happened, no matter how sneaky Andromeda tried to be about it.

She reached her arm through the thick green curtains of her bed and grabbed her wand and an empty cup she kept on her bedside table. She muttered a quiet *aguamenti* and drank the cool water. Two seconds later she dropped the cup in surprise as someone reached their own arms through the bed curtains.

Rita's blonde head popped through the curtains. Her hair was braided back for the night, making her face appear more harsh in the night lighting than usual.

"Merin Rita, you scared the shit out of me."

She received a crooked grin, "I know."

Rita pulled her whole body into the bed and closed the curtains firmly. Crooked grin was now gone from her face.

“Heard you wake up a couple times.”

Bellatrix quickly averted her gaze, “Sorry, didn’t mean to wake you.”

Rita placed a hand on Bellatrix’s shoulder, removing quickly when Bellatrix tensed up.

Bellatrix willed herself for a moment before finally turning her head and giving Rita a tight smile. “Couple bad dreams.”

Rita nodded, her face pensive but her eyes glittering back and forth.

“What were they about?”

Bellatrix licked her lips and averted her eyes.

“Family stuff.” She responded with another tight smile.

Rita frowned and rested her head on Bellatrix’s shoulder.

“Tell me about it.”

Bellatrix couldn’t see her anymore, but she had a feeling those big eyes were still moving quick, glittering with thought.

“They…They’re…I mean well…Rita you know my parents aren’t nice people.”

Rita stayed silent and Bellatrix took it as her cue to keep going.

“I mean, in general the Black family isn’t known for being a group of particularly pleasant people.

But my parents, they aren’t kind to us. If the Blacks weren’t batshit insane about heirs they never would have had kids in the first place. So my mother has this deep resentment in her about what me and my siblings took from her, if that makes sense. My father got betrothed to my mother when he was thirteen. So he obviously wasn’t very suited for fatherhood.”

Rita turned her head to look up at Bellatrix, meeting her eyes with her own, sympathetic and warm. Bellatrix continued.

“They’re strict, and when we fail to meet the requirements set out for us. They hurt me sometimes, you know.”

Rita blinked up at her. “How?”

“Mentally, a lot of the time. Yelling and mind games. But sometimes, if you really fuck up, physically. Never with their hands though. Always their wands. Isn’t that funny?” Bellatrix blinked back some tears that were threatening to pour out of her eyes.

Rita leaned forward and hugged her tightly for several long moments and Bellatrix felt her body begin to regulate itself in the comfort of Rita’s arms. Her strong embrace was calming her enough that she realized she had poured more of her heart out than she intended and Rita was now wielding some very dangerous secrets.

“”Rita, you can’t tell anyone.”

“Course not Trix. You’re my best friend. I would never do that too you. She whispered into Bellatrix’s hair, made more wild from the restless night.

“”Thank you.” Bellatrix whispered, so low she almost wondered if it was possible she hadn’t said it. But Rita heard, she knew she had.

Eventually Bellatrix lay back down on the silk pillow and sighed, casting a quick tempus.

“Still two hours until we have to be up.”

Rita nodded, then cocked her head, eyes mischievous once again.

“True, and my bed is so far away.”

Bellatrix grinned. “True, it really is too bad. If only there was a solution.” Then she patted the spot next to her on the bed.

“Come on then. May as well try and catch up on a bit of sleep.”

Rita laughed and then lay down next to Bellatrix, facing her with wide eyes.

“Night Trix.”

“Don’t call me that.” Bellatrix whispered, smiled wide and a new unsettling feeling appeared in her stomach.

Bellatrix fell asleep eventually and Rita rolled onto her back, torn between two choices. Bellatrix was her best friend, but the information she had just been given was priceless. She didn’t feel like she had a choice. But, looking over at the curly haired girl sleeping peacefully beside her she steeled herself too wait a little bit longer before making a decision.

Chapter End Notes

two chapters in two days because i love y'all

Chapter 56 - Eyes Like Sinking Ships on Waters

Slamming her book shut at the end of a study session was arguably one of Andromeda's favorite things to do. The cloud of dust that almost always billowed up from the book was almost enough to compensate her for her efforts. She loved knowing how to do magic, but the lessons and the theory were driving her insane. She didn't even know how she was only in her second year.

She let her head slump dramatically onto the pile of books scattered around the table and let out a long and weary sigh. She was perfectly happy to continue her melancholic behavior for a bit longer but was interrupted by snickering beside her. Her eyelids shot open as she glared at Jones, who was no doubt laughing at her own dramatics.

"Is it a legal requirement for your family to be obnoxiously dramatic or something?"

Andromeda glared down at her, only to be rewarded with a gleaming smile.

"I'm taking that as a yes."

"I'm allowed to be dramatic," Andromeda protested, "I feel like all I do is study! I'm a second-year student!"

Hestia nodded. "But you choose to push yourself. You get amazing marks but you're still so self-critical! I don't get it."

Andromeda pushed down the flickering of rage she felt growing at her comment. It wasn't Jones's fault that she didn't know what it was like to have a brilliant sister. She didn't know what it was like to see your mother's pursed lips when you came home and she found out you weren't top of the class. She didn't know about the sinking pit in her stomach as soon as she realized someone had done better than her. How could she know? It wasn't her fault she didn't understand.

Hestia's dark eyebrows furrowed as she noticed Andromeda's change in demeanor. "Sorry, did I say something wrong?"

Andromeda shook her head quickly, "Nothing's wrong I think I'm just a bit tired. I'm gonna go."

As she walked down the corridors out of the library she began to feel slightly suffocated. Okay, yes she was being dramatic. But she could feel the anxiety of the interaction bubbling over inside her. Why did she have to make everything about herself? Why couldn't she just hang out like a normal person with the Hufflepuffs?

As she walked, she felt her pace and her heart rate begin to quicken. The hallways were so peaceful, the sun shining through the autumn leaves and leaving shadows all over the stone walls. It was almost pretty enough to make her want to smile. Students walking through the

corridors gave her odd looks which she could only assume were due to her scowling face. Why couldn't she be friendly and pleasant like…speak of the devil Tonks was walking right towards her.

"Hey, Dromeda. You alright?"

She pursed her lips to hold back the retort sitting on the tip of her tongue. She managed to give him a pinched tight smile.
"Feeling fine."

He gave her an easy grin, "Liar. Wanna talk about it?"

She supposed she should resent being seen through so easily but something was reassuring about it. About not actually having to say or unpack her emotions but still being aware someone knew and maybe even understood how she was feeling.

"I don't really feel like talking about it." She said, voice more cold than she really intended. She was going to let Tonks walk away but something about the look of disappointment on his face pulled irritatingly at her heartstrings.

"Merlin, don't look at me like that. It's nothing personal, I just don't like talking about my feelings."

Worry flashed over Tonk's face but she spoke again before he could say anything.

"It's not a twisted noble house of black thing I swear, it's a Slytherin thing."

Tonks smiled at her, head tilted slightly as if he was still deciding whether or not he believed her.

"Seriously, sometimes you don't need to talk. You just need to take a walk."

She grabbed the shorter boy by the elbow and they walked to one of the corridors that led outdoors.

"Where are we going?" Ted asked eventually. Andromeda rolled her eyes.

"These walks are just to clear your mind, you wander everywhere and nowhere." She paused for a moment and Tonks opened his mouth to say something, but she cut him off quickly.
"And you don't talk."

He gave her a small grin and mimed zipping his lips shut and locking them. Holding the imaginary key he grabbed her hand and Andromeda fought the urge to yank it away, instead laughing as he placed the imaginary key solemnly in her hand.

They walked off of one of the paths, instead choosing to traipse through the damp cool grass of the grounds. It was no longer sunny, clouds hovering above them and dousing the world in shades of gray. Against the fog, the grass almost seemed more vibrant and Andromeda smiled as she stared down at it. She impulsively reached down to run her fingers through the damp grass and smiled at the coolness of it. She pushed her fingers even deeper down into it,

laughing again at the way the earth felt against her fingers. She loved walks like this, the connection it allowed her to feel to the castle and its grounds, she hesitated for a moment as she realized how private these moments really were to her.

She smiled shyly at Tonks when she realized she didn't really mind him tagging along. She patted the ground next to her and he followed her suit, running his hands through the grass and grinning.

"You're an odd creature, Andromeda," he said, eyes flickering with curiosity as he smiled up at her.

She grinned at him and then lay fully down in the cold grass. "I know."

Chapter 57 - I Can See You

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bellatrix had been watching Dumbledore. This year he seemed more peculiar than usual if that was possible. His normally teasing blue eyes flitted with doubt every once and awhile and once she had watched him pace down a corridor for twenty minutes straight for what appeared to be no reason. Now she had known he was an old fool since she'd met him but this seemed a bit dramatic even for him.

This current of uneasiness ran through adults everywhere these days she had noticed, not just Dumbledore. There had occasionally been mentions of the word war and the even more frightening stale silence that followed the word.

Her parents had been encouraging more political inserts into the rumor mill which she had been able to tell were getting on Rita's nerves a little bit, but it's not like she had a choice. If her parents told her to do something, no friendship was worth going against them. Not even Rita's.

Thinking about her friendship with Rita brought her to her other issue. She'd first noticed her issue with this friendship when she'd been hanging out with the whole dorm and Zabini had playfully caressed Rita's cheek. It had filled Bellatrix with a blinding rage. It was gone as quickly as it had come but it was still a puzzling reaction to her. Why would it make her mad when one of her friends touched Rita, but not make her angry when people touched her other friends? She didn't appreciate the lack of control, the way her breath sped up and her heart pounded against her violation. She hated the lack of power, the feeling of losing herself to an almost caveman level of rationality such as jealousy. Jealousy? Was that what she was feeling towards people touching Rita? Maybe she was worried about Rita wanting another best friend, that was probably it.

She had resolved to breach the topic to Rita today. But Rita had been busier than usual as well The Rumor Mill had been picking up pretty steadily in business since the start of the year especially with anonymous gossip submissions and Rita, well Rita was having the time of her fucking life.

She would lie in Bellatrix's bed at night backing away and annotating with one of her pompous green quills, delighting in the drama of the school. Her soft giggles at the drama of those around her filled Bellatrix with a warm and slightly uncomfortable feeling. She

wondered if this was part of the jealousy issue. Maybe she was jealous of the time Rita was giving to the Rumor Mill. Bellatrix decided this must be the answer while still doubting it herself. No, it didn't seem quite right but she hated not having the answer to her own emotions so it was the answer she was going with.

Rita had looked up from the piles of parchment surrounding her and flitted her glittering eyes up to meet Bellatrix's own. A small smile pulled at the blonde girl's mouth as she raised her eyebrows in curiosity.

"You seem to be thinking hard over there."

Bellatrix gave her a small smile and agreed. "I was just thinking about us."

She could have sworn Rita's pale freckle-dusted cheeks turned a bit rosy at the words. Bellatrix hastily corrected herself.

"I mean, our friendship. I think…" She didn't know why it felt so awkward to say this to the girl she had been attached to since her first year. "Rita you know your my best friend right?"

Rita's smile split open, blindingly happy reaching out and warming Bellatrix with joy. Rita was contagious like that.

"Course I know that Trix. Nobody annoys you quite like I do."

Bellatrix laughed, ignoring the deep feeling of displeasure that had run through her at Rita's words. She had gotten the answer to the question she had asked, but it still felt wrong. When she looked at Rita, especially recently it felt like something had changed.

Rita was worried about Bellatrix. She had seemed off lately. Staring at Rita for extended periods of time and then allowing her eyes to flit away quickly when she saw Rita watching her back. Rita was beginning to feel a sense of dread about the parchment sitting in the drawer of her bedside table. Maybe Bellatrix knew, and she was just waiting her out and waiting to catch Rita slipping up and then attacking.

Rita watched Bellatrix uneasily now while biting at her favorite green quill. Then Bellatrix took her by surprise with her comment. Of course, Rita was her best friend. Is that what she was worried about? Sometimes she wanted to laugh at how detached from the world Trix was. The way she didn't seem to realize people didn't like Rita very much and they certainly didn't like Bellatrix.

Maybe Bellatrix didn't notice, but Rita did. When they were walking down the corridors to get to classes and students would shift a little further away as their whispers dimmed down. The way even the teachers eyed the girls up and down as they walked through the hallway. It wasn't as bad for Zabini and Carrow because they hadn't made themselves the face of untouchable rebellion quite as dramatically as Bellatrix and by proxy Rita.

Sometimes Rita found herself wishing Bellatrix wasn't as addicted to winning as she was. The way she went up against her parents, Dumbledore, and the teachers. The way she delighted in the sneaky and conniving way of getting what she wanted, was hard to watch. Rita knew that while she was on Bellatrix's side, standing by her as her best friend, no harm could come to her. But if ever they turned on each other Rita wasn't sure she could withstand the waves of destruction Bellatrix Black radiated.

Chapter End Notes

hi lovelies, hope you enjoyed it. Also can't believe I've hit 50k words so excited for this stories development and I really hope you guys are still loving it. <3

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